Oriental
Bird Club

Bulletin 27 • June 1998

The Oriental Bird Club aims to:

- **encourage an interest in the birds of the Oriental region and their conservation.**
- **liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies.**
- **collate and publish material on Oriental birds.**

Two bulletins and a journal, *Forktail*, are published annually

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Membership of OBC

Membership of the Club is open to all and for 1998 costs £15 per annum (£10 reduced rate for nationals living in Oriental countries who cannot afford the full rate), £20 Family, £25 Supporting Member (funding one Oriental member in addition to ordinary membership), £25 Libraries and academic institutions, and £45 Business Supporters. Special arrangements for payment exist in USA, Thailand and India. To join or for further details please contact the Membership Secretary, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK.

OBC Web Site

http://www.orientalbirdclub.org/

Cover illustration:

Green Avadavat *Amandava formosa* by Michael O'Clery.
Read more about some recent observations of this species on page 21.

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Club News

DIARY DATES

British Birdwatching Fair, Rutland Water, 21st-23rd August

The Club will once again have a stand at the UK's premier event for the birding 'industry'. Members who wish to help staff the stand – and practise their direct selling techniques with books of raffle tickets – should contact the Secretary, c/o The Lodge. This raffle will be the Mega Prize Draw which from now on will take place at the Bird Fair rather than at the December AGM. UK members should return sold raffle tickets (enclosed with this issue) to the OBC's Lodge address by 10th August. The first prize is a pair of Leica 8 × 32 binoculars generously donated by Leica Cameras.

The Club's new limited edition T-shirt design by Tim Worfolk will be unveiled at the Bird Fair.

OBC Blakeney Meeting, 30th August

The Club's traditional August Bank Holiday Sunday meeting is at Blakeney Village Hall, Norfolk. Doors open at 12 noon, talks start around 14.00. This is a good opportunity to combine autumn birding on the East Coast with an afternoon of talks about Oriental birds.

OBC AGM, London, 12th December

The Club's Annual General Meeting at the Zoological Society of London's Meeting Room, Regents Park, London NW1 will be a joint meeting with the British Ornithologists' Union.

The only speaker confirmed at this early stage is Nigel Collar, OBC Council member and co-author of *Birds to Watch 2*, BirdLife International's definitive publication on the status of the world's threatened birds.

Report on Joint Meeting with Dutch Birding in Utrecht

A small band of OBC members from the UK crossed the North Sea to join colleagues from Dutch Birding at their annual meeting in Utrecht on 7th February. A varied lecture programme included Finnish birder Jari Peltomaki discussing various Palearctic identification challenges, particularly buntings (Emberizidae), former OBC Chairman Paul Jepson on Indonesia's conservation priorities and OBC Secretary Brian Sykes on the work of the Club. Finally Ian Burrows presented a most interesting talk on the birds of Papua New Guinea.

There was also a very challenging Mystery Birds competition in which the 300 plus Dutch birders present showed their considerable identification skills.

The following day the OBC group was given a guided birding tour of what seemed like most of the Netherlands. Arnoud van den Berg was our tireless guide who served up the country's 13th White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephalus* consorting perilously with a Ruddy Duck *O. jamaicensis* near Amsterdam as an appetiser before we headed east.

In Flevoland we enjoyed a fine assortment of raptors: a distant immature White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*, Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* and dozens of Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo*. In one field there were 30 Buzzards together, many hovering just 2-3 metres above the ground as they hunted for voles.

Heading for North Holland we encountered six species of geese including a flock of 22 Lesser White-fronts *Anser erythropus*. Our final port of call was an area of parkland back near Amsterdam where we saw a Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* come into roost and watched a pair of Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* huddled together outside their nest hole.

It was a fine ending to an excellent weekend and we extend our thanks to Arnoud and all the Dutch Birding team for their hospitality.

1997 AGM Report

Another successful AGM within earshot of the London Zoo gibbons. Around 200 members heard talks which took us from the highlands to the islands of the Orient.

Tim Worfolk transported us to The Roof of the World for his lecture about the birds of Tibet and Qinghai and Otto Pfister kept us in the high Himalayas with his talk on Ladakh and its Black-necked Cranes.

In between, Paul Jepson brought us back down to sea level with a tour of The World's Largest Archipelago, Indonesia. He particularly focused on the conservation dilemmas of a rapidly growing state - and one that is now grappling with an economy in turmoil.

Changes on OBC Council

The following Council members stood down at the AGM: Mike Blair, Richard Bosanquet, Nona Finch, Melanie Heath, Colin Poole and Simon Stirrup. They were all thanked for their efforts on behalf of the Club.

New members of Council elected at the AGM were: Phil Benstead, Nigel Collar, Krys Kazmierczak, Marcus Kohler, Debbie Pain and Margaret Sykes.

Nigel Redman has kindly agreed to return as Chairman for a further year and the AGM also approved a variation of the Club constitution so that Graeme Spinks could continue as Treasurer for a further year beyond the four-year stint he has just completed.

The traditional Main Raffle draw was made by our visiting OBC India Representative, Bikram Grewal who is seen here (left) presenting a Wild China book to one of the winning ticket holders, OBC member Gerry Burman.

OBC Awards

The winners of the 1997 Forktail-Leica Award and the 1997 OBC-Wildwings Conservation Awareness Award were announced at the AGM in London.

There were eight applicants for the Forktail-Leica Award which was won by Dr Ashfaque Ahmed for his proposed wildlife studies in North-East India. He will be conducting ornithological surveys of Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary in West Sikkim where Blyth's Tragopan *Tragopan blythii* was recorded in 1992. This award is generously funded by Leica Cameras. This is the eighth year the optics company has supported OBC conservation work and the Club is very grateful for its sustained support.

LEICA

WILDWINGS

The 1997 OBC-Wildwings Conservation Awareness Award was won by Ms Saeeda Inayat of WWF Pakistan. Hers was one of 11 applications for the £1,000 award generously funded by the leading travel company for birders, Wildwings. Ms Inayat plans to initiate a nature conservation education programme in girls' schools in Pakistan. The project will target female school teachers to spread the conservation message by starting nature clubs for more than 2,000 schoolgirls in Chitral district, North West Frontier Province.

The Club's Conservation subcommittee considered this a worthy winner as girls have largely been ignored in previous conservation awareness projects in Pakistan.

This is the third year that Wildwings has sponsored the award and the Club is very grateful for the company's continued support.

There is more information about these award winners and other Conservation Fund grant announcements on the Club's website.

New Website Address

The OBC has a new, far more user-friendly, Internet website address.

It is http://www.orientalbirdclub.org

Please visit us if you have the opportunity to do so and let us know what you think!

Overwhelming response from OBC Members to BirdLife Questionnaire

We still have much to learn about the birds of the Orient, and with many not yet studied we know little about their distribution, and often much less about their general ecology. More than 400 (*c.* 20%) of the Orient's birds are listed as globally threatened by BirdLife International and saving the most threatened of these from extinction will be partly based on a greater understanding of their populations, habitats, and conservation measures to be taken. A short observation of a threatened species perhaps may not seem to amount to much, and some members may question the usefulness of their own observations. However, given the lack of information for many species the collation of these small snippets of data can in some cases really help to build up a picture of a species' general ecology and likely threatened status. Much of this information is unpublished, residing in OBC members' notebooks or in their happy memories of a special moment.

In an attempt to begin to pull together unpublished data on threatened birds a questionnaire was sent last Autumn to OBC members living outside the Oriental Region.* The aim of the questionnaire was to identify members who could have useful information on threatened Asian birds. We wanted to maximise both the ease of use and minimise the time to complete the questionnaire, in the hope that this would encourage even the busiest of members to contribute. The results of the questionnaire cannot themselves be used in the Asian Red Data Book for birds, but the information generated has identified the species and the countries in which members have personal experience and whether they have information on breeding for any species. What this information brings to those working on the project is the ability to pinpoint members who potentially have important information on a particular species.

All your records have been added to a spreadsheet. As the data gathering for the project nears completion we shall assess those species for which we lack information, especially for a particular country or region. We hope in the next six months to contact those members who perhaps have data that will add to our knowledge of a threatened bird.

We have had an overwhelming response to the questionnaire and BirdLife would like to thank warmly all those who have kindly taken the time to fill in its contents and pass their information back to us. Rather than thank you all individually we would like to instead acknowledge all participating members now (as of 31st March):

Dr Peter D. Alexander-Marrack, Per Alind, David Allen, Per Alström, Tim Andersen, Björn Anderson, Terry J. Atkinson, Mark A. Barter, Clive E. Bealey, Dr Wolfgang Beisenherz, S. Chris Bell, Hans & Judy Beste, Keith Betton, D.W. Billing, Dr Stephen J.M. Blaber, Nik Borrow, John Boughey, Jonathan Bowler, Paul W. Bradbeer, Barnaby D. Briggs, Lysle R. Brinker, Dr I. Lehr Brisbin, Christopher F. Brooks, David L. Buckingham, Sebastian T. Buckton, Dr Niall H.K. Burton, Bruce Carrick, Dr John J. Carroll, Clifford Carter, Mark Catterall, Claes-Göran Cederlund, Allen & Nancy Chartier, Russell A. Childs, Jan H. Christensen, David A. Christie, Tom & Liz Clinton, Dr Simon Cox, Dr John P. Croxall, Peter Cuerel, Prof Dr Eberhard Curio, Donald R. Dann, Peter Davidson, Adam P. Davison, Alan R. Dean, Rodney J. Dean, Albert B. Devitt, Chris Donald, Dr Max Dornbusch, Dr Simon Dowell, Allan Drewitt, Raf Drijvers, J. Nicholas Dymond, Richard Eden, Dr Martin H. Edwards, Dr Phillip J. Edwards, Mark I. Eldridge, Jacques Erard, Matthias Fehlow, David J. Fisher, Keith Fisher, John Fitch, John A. Flynn, Ronald W. Forrester, Ben Fraser, James Fritzhand, Paul Fuller, Christopher P. Galey, Dr Anita Gamauf, Nicholas J. Gardner, Dr A. Gaston, Brian D. Gee, Alice M. Geffen, David J. Gibbs, Jan Ove Gjershaug, Geoffrey Grafton, John L. Gregory, Richard Gregory-Smith, Dr Andrew D. Grieser Johns, David Griffin, Marc Guyt, Steffen Gysel, Paul Hale, John B. Halliday, Roy A. & Moira Y. Hargreaves, Simon Harrap, Andrew H.J. Harrop, Peter & Pauline Heathcote, Morten Heegaard, Dr David G. Henderson, Mogens Henriksen, Dale R. Herter, Anthony J. Holcombe, David W. Holden, Mrs E. Pauline Holland, Paul Holmes, Dr Peter J. Holt, Paul I. Holt, David J. Hope, Peter J. Hopkin, Dr John R. Hopkins, Stan Howe, Frank Hummel, Kalan Ickes, Tim P. Inskipp, Richard K. Irvin, Magnus Jäderblad, David C. Jardine, Stefan Johansson, Ron J. Johns, Dr David L. Johnson, Hans Jornvall, Dr Mikael Käll, Mikhail V. Kalyakin, Stephen G. Keen, Peter R. Kennerley, Martin Kennewell, Lt. Col. Peter S. Kerr-Smiley, Guy M. Kirwan, Richard Koeppel, Marcus J.A. Kohler, Lasse J. Laine, Bjorn E. Larsen, Ms Patricia Ann Lawson, Pey-Yi Lee, Mauri J. Leivo, Raymond P.J. Leveque, Alan Lewis, Ian M. Lewis, Durwyn Liley, Mark D. Linsley, Steve M. Lister, Mr William & Mrs Linda Macaulay, Dr Calum F. Mackenzie, Steve Madge, David P. Mallon, Dr Clive F. Mann, Todd R. Mark, Lou Marsh, Prof Dr Jochen Martens, Dr Stephen G. Martin, Peter W. Maton, Hugh D. Matthews, Dr Barry McCarthy, Eric R. Meek, Mick Mellor, Patricia H. Meyer, Dr David Milton, Dr Cornelis W. Moeliker, William G. Morgan, John Morris, Peter A.J. Morris, Chris Murphy, Angus Murray, Edward T. Myers, Susan D. Myers, Marc Narcy, Dr Stephen P. Newman, Serge Nicolle, Vincent Nijman, Jonas Nordin, Dr Stephen J. Ormerod, Andrew Owen, John Palfery, Dr Adrian J. Parr, Alan J. Pearson, Bent Boggild Pedersen, Daniel Philippe, John Q. Phillipps, Kah Heng Phon, Andrew J. Pierce, David J. Pollard, Colin M. Poole, Jean-Claude Porchier, David J. Powell, Nick Preston, Olivier Prevost, Ian Puckrin, Suhel Quader, Brian Rabbitts, Alex J. Randall, David A. Richardson, Jon Riley, Don Roberson, Andrew L. Robertson, Matthew Rodgers, Danny Rogers, Michael E.S. Rooney, David Rosair, Roger Safford, Ruud Schenk, Per Schiermacker-Hansen, N. John Schmitt, Dr Derek A. Scott, Mrs Mary J. Seal Coon, Dr Roland Seitre, J.P. Shaughnessy, Peter Shepherd, Jean-Claude Simard, Billy Simpson, Bengt-Eric Sjölinder, Roger Q. Skeen, Edmund F.G. Smith, Stewart P. Smith, Thomas Smith, Mrs Phoebe Snetsinger, Ann Sole, Graham J. Speight, Mike Spicer, Kenneth J. Spriggs, John E. Squire, David Steele, Ms Belinda Stewart-Cox, Simon A. Stirrup, Anthony J. Stones, Mark D. Sutton, Peter Svensson, Dr Kees Swennen, Christopher A. Sykes, Ian Taylor, Jens Thalund, Richard M. Thewlis, Richard & Sarah Thomas, Guy Thompson, David Tipling, Raymond P. Tipper, Ms Carolyn Titus, Philip J. Tizzard, Robert Tymstra, Tord Uggla, Mark van Beirs, Arend S. van Riessen, Martin Vestergaard, Clive A. Viney, Dr Richard Waldrop, Richard W. Walters, Robert K. Walton, Jim C. Wardill, John J. Warham, Dr Beat A. Wartmann, Bob Watts, P.N. Watts, Andrew Webb, Dr Mark R. Welfare, David R. Wells, Nigel R. Wheatley, Dr John P.C. Wheeler, Peter Widmann, Michael Widmer, Paul J. Willoughby, Geoffrey Wisdom, Tim Worfolk and Barry E. Wright.

*The questionnaire has been sent only to those members residing outside the Orient as data gathering for the Asian Red Data Book for Birds in Asian nations is being carried out by a network of national co-ordinators. However, if you have not yet been involved in the project but would like more information on how to contribute, please contact Nigel Collar on Asiardb@birdlife.org.uk

Contributed by Adrian Long

Kingfisher Tours sponsor a second conservation project.

In Bulletin 24 (p. 3) we welcomed Kingfisher Tours aboard as a new corporate sponsor. We are now delighted to report that they have donated a further sum of £500 to fund a second conservation project in China. The two conservation projects supported are a bird diversity survey in the Jiaozi Snow Mountains of Yunnan, China and a bird diversity survey in Leigong Mountain Nature Reserve, Guizhou, China.

Further details of both projects can be found in the Conservation Fund section of this Bulletin.

Register of Ornithological Volunteering Opportunities

The OBC is co-operating with ABC, NBC, OSME and the RSPB in producing an annual register of volunteering opportunities. The first edition is due to be published in spring 1998. Any member who is interested in consulting the register should write to the Secretary, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK. Any member who knows of a project which would welcome ornithological volunteers should send details to Richard Porter at The Lodge address given above.

Regional Meeting with Malaysian Nature Society

The regional meeting in conjunction with the Malaysian Nature Society - Bird Group was held in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday 11th October 1997. It was well attended by MNS and OBC members from Malaysia and Singapore who were entertained by illustrated talks by Ooi Chin Hock, Mike Chong and Allen Jeyarajasingam. Brian Sykes who represented OBC Council at the event gave a brief talk and answered questions about the Club. Thanks go to Mike Chong, OBC co-representative in Malaysia, for organising this event and also to Club member Ng Bee Choo for bringing OBC Sales items for the meeting from Singapore.

OBC Team success at Singapore Bird Race 18th-19th October 1997

The OBC Forktails team (137 confirmed species) captained by Lim Kim Chuah, supported by Ng Bee Choo and Brian Sykes claimed second place behind the Strix team (142 species) led by OBC member Subaraj Rajathurai in a keenly fought contest at this annual event organised by the Nature Society of Singapore Bird Group. The number of species recorded by the leading teams in 1997 was somewhat lower than in previous years, possibly due to the effects of the now notorious 'haze' from the fires sweeping parts of Indonesia which were affecting Singapore at the time.

New Regional Representatives

Paul Thompson has agreed to become OBC co-representative in Bangladesh alongside Anisuzzaman Khan, and Ray Tipper will become the new OBC representative in Portugal.

Corrigenda

The species of crane mentioned in the review of Birds of the Hengduan Mountains (*OBC Bull*: 26, 68) was wrongly given as Demoiselle Crane *Grus virgo*. It should have read Sarus Crane *G. antigone*.

Several errors appeared in the article on *Watching seabirds on the west coast of Sri Lanka* by Rex de Silva (*OBC Bull:* 26, 42). These should be corrected as follows:

1) The list of terns at the beginning of paragraph 2, column 2, page 43 should have included Saunders's Tern *Sterna saundersi*.

2) All of the seabird records mentioned (see column 2, p. 43) are accepted by the Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka and are included in the definitive checklist of the birds of Sri Lanka by S. Kotagama (reference 2 in this article).

3) Reference 2 was incorrectly given with the dates (1981-1994): these should be deleted.

We wish to apologise to Rex de Silva for these errors which were introduced during the typesetting and editing stages.

Addenda to December 1997 Itineraries Supplement

Bundala Lewaya is a few kilometres after the Bundala National Park office not a few kilometres before the park office as stated.

The supplement separately listed the sites of Embilikala Kalapuwa and Malala Lewaya. This may have given the impression that they are distinct from the Bundala National Park, when in fact they are contained within the park.
They were listed separately by the authors because they are good birding locations and can be viewed from public roads without requiring a permit for the park. This may change.

Conservation Fund

Compiled by Marcus Kohler with contributions from Phil Benstead, Andy Clements, Mike Crosby and Carol Inskipp.

OBC CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

OBC have in the last year passed the milestone of supporting their 100th project. This means that over £50,000 has been channelled directly into conservation within the Oriental region. However, there is a responsibility to continue to develop the work of the conservation fund and with this in mind the conservation committee has now been expanded to meet the increased workload. The committee now has the following members:

Anny Andaryati – now responsible for projects in Indonesia, Vietnam and Laos.

Phil Benstead – now responsible for projects in northern India and Pakistan.

Andy Clements – now responsible for projects in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

Mike Crosby – continuing to be responsible for projects in China.

Melanie Heath – formerly Conservation Officer, Mel is continuing to advise the committee.

Carol Inskipp – Carol has been involved in the conservation fund since its onset and is continuing to oversee projects in southern India and Sri Lanka.

Marcus Kohler – taking over the role of Conservation Officer, with a co-ordinating role and responsibility for Thailand.

Debbie Pain – now responsible for projects in Malaysia and the Philippines

STOP PRESS:
The leaflet announcing the 1998 Forktail-Leica Award and the 1998 OBC-Wildwings Conservation Awareness Award was omitted from the Forktail mailing due to postage costs. As a result of the late announcement of these awards, all efforts will be made to consider applications which arrive later that the 1st September deadline given in the leaflet. However, we would ask that applicants still try to ensure that their applications will arrive by this date.

GRANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are pleased to announce both the 1997 Forktail-Leica Award and the 1997 OBC-Wildwings Conservation Awareness Award. There are a further three conservation awareness projects in the Philippines, Thailand and India which have been awarded small grants. Six other applicants have been awarded small grants with three new projects commencing in India, two in Nepal and one in Thailand. Last, but by no means least, we are proud to announce that Kingfisher Tours of Hong Kong are generously sponsoring two projects in China.

1997 Forktail-Leica Award:

Wildlife Studies of Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary, North-East India

We are grateful for the continued support of Leica Cameras, now in their eighth year of sponsoring this award, which in 1997 was given to Ashfaque Ahmed for his proposal on Wildlife Studies of Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary.

In 1992 a specimen of Blyth's Tragopan *Tragopan blythii* was procured by the Zoological Society of India from this site. This record substantially increases the range of the species. This

LEICA

study aims to survey the sanctuary for the presence of this and other galliform species and provide a database of other bird species in the area. The project will also undertake mammal surveys, undertake habitat studies of the site and train forest department personnel in census techniques.

1997 OBC-Wildwings Conservation Awareness Award:

Initiating nature conservation programmes in girls' schools in Northern Pakistan

This is the third year that Wildwings, the leading travel agency for birders, has supported this award which was given to Saeeda Inayat of WWF-Pakistan for her proposal to initiate a conservation campaign within girls' schools in Chitral, North West Frontier Province, Pakistan. Although a series of conservation associations have been established at village level in the Chitral region, girls' schools have for a variety of reasons remained ignored, resulting in the message of conservation not reaching an important segment of society. This proposal aims to redress the balance and target girls' schools in the region. The project intends to initiate nature club activities in selected schools with a particular emphasis on bird conservation. It is intended to initiate a teacher-training programme for teachers to run nature clubs and encourage awareness of environmental education. The programme intends to reach over 2000 children in the region and will produce a booklet for female Nature Club Leaders on bird conservation issues.

WildWings

Tayabas Travelling Eco-exhibit, Philippines

Rolando Redor of the Tayabas Mountaineers (a community based environmental NGO) has been awarded a grant of £750 to undertake this highly original project which narrowly missed being awarded the OBC-Wildwings Conservation Awareness Award.

The project will involve creating a travelling gallery to promote conservation awareness of the wildlife of the tropical forests of Tayabas. The gallery will be hand-crafted from indigenous sustainable materials and display visual information about the local wildlife including endemic species such as Rufous Hornbill *Buceros hydrocorax* and Philippine Frogmouth *Batrachostomus septimus*. The eco-exhibit will tour sixty-six barangays within the community and will be manned by volunteers who will be trained as tour co-ordinators in a two-day seminar.

Youth Camp Project, Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary, Thailand

Santana Pluemshoosak of the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand has been awarded a small grant of £500 to undertake a youth camp project for the Karen children of Sanepong-Koa School. These children live within the boundaries of a wildlife sanctuary and the project aims to educate and stimulate an appreciation of native wildlife and birds through a weekend youth camp project involving 40 students and 10 teachers. The camp will be held at Thung Yai Naresuan Sanctuary and will involve a range of nature-based activities for children as well as guest speakers and a slide show.

Creating bird conservation awareness in secondary schools in Kerala State, India

E. V. Abdulla has been awarded a small grant to undertake a conservation awareness programme in 100 schools within the district of Kozhikode, Kerala. The programme will involve slide-shows of native birds, birdwatching excursions for students, educational competitions and quizzes. It is hoped to establish birdwatching clubs in each school and supply leaflets and booklets on conservation.

Bird Study: an introductory manual for birdwatchers, India

A small grant has been awarded to Dr Abdul Jamil Urfi to fund the production of an illustrated book discussing the science and methodology of studying birds, with emphasis on survey techniques for counting birds. The target audience will be amateur birdwatchers and naturalists in the hope of encouraging these groups to participate in more scientifically based surveys and observations.

The Swamp Francolin in the Indian Terai

BIRDQUEST

Through the generosity of another £500 donation from Birdquest, a grant has been awarded to Salim Javed to assess the current status of Swamp Francolin *Francolinus gularis* in the Indian terai. Concern over the status of this species, listed as threatened (Collar *et al.* 1994), and endemic to the Indian subcontinent, has risen given the widespread drainage of its favoured habitat of wet grasslands within the terai. Survey visits will be geared towards the main calling periods of the species, and data will be gathered on habitat requirements.

Birdquest have raised the money to support this project through the sale of their Wallcreeper sweatshirts and the generous donations of their clients. OBC is once again grateful for Birdquest's continued commitment to Oriental conservation.

Bengal Florican in Nepal

Chiranjibi Pd. Pokheral and Narayan Dhakal of Bird Conservation Nepal have been awarded £500 to assess the status of Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis* in Royal Bardia National Park, lowland Nepal. This globally threatened species may be under particular threat in this park from illegal grazing of the phanta and from disturbance by the increasing numbers of visitors. This project will conduct a full survey of the species in the phantas during spring 1998 and assess the effects of the threats to the population. Evidence of species status and vulnerability should provide more information to direct conservation measures.

White-throated Bushchat in Nepal

White-throated Bushchat *Saxicola insignis* is little known in its wintering habitat of large, open phantas in the terai of Nepal. Recent work by Hem Sagar Baral, studying the bird communities of this habitat, has located a significant population in Sukila Phanta Wildlife Reserve, west Nepal. Hem has been awarded a grant of £250 to assist his study of the species' in an important protected area. Status, distribution and habitat requirements within the phantas will be studied to provide further information on the conservation requirements of this vulnerable species.

The role of birds in forest restoration in Northern Thailand

Chersak Kuarak and Derek Hitchcock under the guidance of Dr Stephen Elliot of Chiang Mai University have been awarded a small grant of £500 to undertake a study of avian frugivores in tropical evergreen forest and degraded and regenerating areas of Doi Suthep-Doi Pui National Park.

The aims of this exciting project are to determine which tree species should be planted to attract frugivorous seed-dispersing birds into deforested sites and to make recommendations as to how forest restoration projects might be improved to accelerate the return of avian and botanical diversity by planting key tree species. The methodology will involve intensive observation of bird behaviour at selected fruiting trees within the National Park.

Bird diversity survey in the Jiaozi Snow Mountains of Yunnan, China

BIRDING IN HONG KONG & CHINA KINGFISHER TOURS (HK) LTD

Han Lianxian of Kunming Institute of Zoology has been awarded a small grant, kindly sponsored by Kingfisher Tours, to study the birds of the Jiaozi Snow Mountains. These mountains include the highest peak in central Yunnan, and are a popular sightseeing area for the people of Kunming. Despite their proximity to the city, the avifauna of the mountains has not been investigated in detail, and several new species for central Yunnan were recorded during a brief visit in April 1997. Two surveys will be carried out in 1998, in May and October, and should add considerably to knowledge of the birds, which could include Yunnan Nuthatch *Sitta yunnanensis* and other threatened species. Recommendations regarding the conservation of the area and a checklist of the birds will be prepared for the local forestry and tourist management authorities.

Bird diversity survey in Leigong Mountain Nature Reserve, Guizhou, China

This is the second of the projects to be generously sponsored by Kingfisher Tours. Leigong Mountain Nature Reserve includes areas of primary subtropical broadleaf forest between 1,300 and 2,100 m, and secondary forest and plantations below 1,300 m. A small grant has been awarded to a team led by Liang Wei to carry out surveys there between March and December 1998. Recent fieldwork led to the discovery of the threatened Elliot's Pheasant *Syrmaticus ellioti* in these mountains, but a great deal needs to be understood about the avifauna of the reserve and Guizhou province. The nature reserve was established to protect a rare tree, *Taiwania flousiana*, and most management activity is targeted towards the protection of this species. This project aims to raise awareness of the importance of the reserve for birds and other animals.

CONSERVATION FUND IN ACTION

Bird communities of the oak forests of Kumaon Himalayas, India

An OBC small grant funded a study into the status and conservation of bird communities in oak forest of the Kumaon Himalayas. These once extensive oak forests are declining in area due largely to conversion to agricultural land, and are now a fragmented resource. Human pressure is increasing in the remaining habitat, through grazing and collection of firewood. Until the present two-year study little ornithological work had been undertaken in the area. The studies aimed to survey remaining oak forest fragments and develop a conservation strategy for the birds of the Kumaon Himalayas.

A total of 19 sites was surveyed in three districts: Almorah, Nainittal and Pithoragarh. Birds were surveyed using three methods; species-richness: (which was found to be most effective), point counts and line transects. 232 species were recorded and their altitudinal range, status and mean abundance recorded. Threatened species recorded during the survey included Cheer Pheasant *Catreus wallichi* and Long-billed Bush Warbler *Bradypterus major*.

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Breeding Black-necked Cranes in Changtang, Ladakh, 1997

An OBC small grant partially funded a study of the breeding biology of the globally threatened Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis* in Ladakh during the summer of 1997. Black-necked Cranes breed in remote, high altitude wetlands in Ladakh and Tibet. The harsh terrain and climate of this area and the resultant logistical difficulties have always prevented study of these birds in Ladakh.

The survey revealed 12 breeding pairs in the area as well as a number of non-breeding birds. Losses of eggs were high (46%). Only 38% of eggs hatched and resulted in fledged young (indicating low productivity for the population). A third of all crane egg and chick losses recorded were attributed to dog predation through either stray or graziers' dogs. Other threats to cranes and to other birds nesting in the area were identified as uncontrolled tourism, fishing, and high grazing densities in the wetlands used by the species. Guarding of nests for the first ten weeks by the army was shown to provide effective protection.

The report recommends the following conservation action:

1 Fencing some of the larger, and more disturbed, sites to prevent damaging access by visitors, dogs and grazing animals. Controlled grazing to be allowed between 1st October and 1st April.
2 Control of the large population of stray dogs in the area.

3 A concerted conservation awareness programme aimed at local people and the army.

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Bird survey of Nongkyllem Wildlife Sanctuary, Meghalaya, India

OBC has received an interim report of the bird survey undertaken by Dr Anwaruddin Choudhury of this little known wildlife sanctuary in Meghalaya, north-eastern India. The natural vegetation ranges from tropical semi-evergreen to deciduous forest with small patches of reedbed and grassland present within the sanctuary.

At the time of this report 150 bird species had been personally observed. Among the more noteworthy species recorded were Black Baza *Aviceda jerdoni*, Grey Peacock Pheasant *Polyplectron bicalcaratum*, Wreathed Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis* and Slaty-headed Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*. There had been no observations of key species such as Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis* and Beautiful Nuthatch *Sitta formosa*.

Dr Choudhury notes that forests outside of the sanctuary are either degraded or completely lost to *jhum* (slash and burn agriculture). Additionally, the sanctuary has been encroached by the construction of hydro-electric power projects on its western boundary. The road networks to these areas have encouraged increased hunting in the sanctuary.

Black Baza Aviceda jerdoni *by Anwaruddin Choudhury*

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Status of the Lesser Florican in the Malwa Plateau, India

A small grant of £500 helped to continue survey and conservation work on the Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indica*, a bustard endemic to India. In 1997 Mr P. M. Lad and myself carried out surveys in four areas of the Malwa Plateau in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Mr Lad retired as the Chief Wildlife Warden of Madhya Pradesh and has been working for the conservation of the Lesser Florican since the early 1980s.

The survey was inspiring. We sighted 28 male floricans and obtained reliable information on another 15 males. A total of 43 males in eight days was exceptional florican watching. But much of our exhilaration was considerably dampened when we saw how much the grasslands had deteriorated in quality and extent. We sighted nine floricans in grassland which was not ideal florican habitat. Mr Lad commented that this was probably the death bell tolling, as the birds were in this grassland because there is hardly any reasonable habitat left.

However, there is some encouraging news. The grassland in Sailana Kharmor Sanctuary, amongst the most important florican areas in western Madhya Pradesh, which has deteriorated considerably, is probably going to be acquired by the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department. With this acquisition, there is hope that the Lesser Florican in Madhya Pradesh will receive a fresh lease of life.

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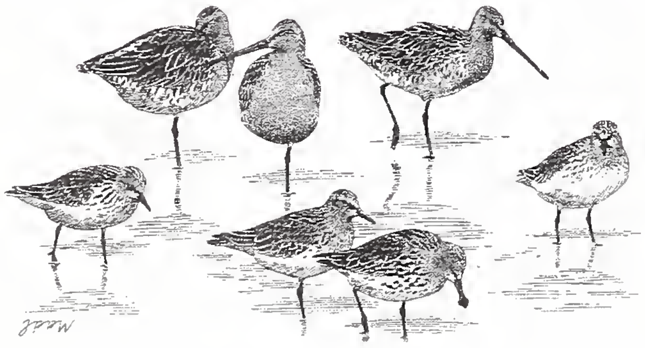
Status of Spoon-billed Sandpiper and Asian Dowitcher and threats to waders on the Indian East Coast

A grant of £500 funded a survey of waders along India's East Coast from Chilka Lake in Orissa to Point Calimere in Tamil Nadu between February and April 1997. The survey focused on searching for two rare waders, Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* and Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmeus*, as well as counting other wader species in each wetland surveyed. The Great Vedaranyam Swamp of Point Calimere and the Nalaban Island of Chilka Lake were surveyed intensively as these are the two major known localities of the two species in India. Asian Dowitcher was recorded twice at Nalaban Island in March (1 + 3 birds) and once at Point Calimere in February where three birds were seen in the intertidal area along the Chellakani River. Spoon-billed Sandpiper was not recorded during the survey, but a British birdwatcher saw one in January at Point Calimere. The previous records and the results of the present survey indicate that Asian Dowitcher and Spoon-billed Sandpiper regularly occur in small numbers at both Point Calimere and Chilka. As they have generally been recorded in estuarine habitat, occurrence is possible in the Kaliveli and Pulicat wetlands on passage.

Although the two known major localities for these species are in bird sanctuaries, they face severe threats from poachers. The Spoon-billed Sandpiper along with hundreds of Little Stints *Calidris minuta* can easily be caught by the clap trap method, and are particularly vulnerable. This traditional method of catching birds is very effective for small waders which feed in areas of shallow water during daylight. This poaching method is more in evidence on the Tamil Nadu and southern Andhra Pradesh coasts. Many bird trappers depend on the birds of the Great Vedaranyam Swamp for their livelihood during the migration season from September to December. The other main method for catching birds is the mash-net method (similar to mist nets) and is mainly used for medium-sized and large waders at night. Asian Dowitchers can be caught using this method and are also vulnerable to the use of nooses. The trappers operate all along the migratory route between Tamil Nadu and Pulicat Lake. However it appears there is no threat facing Spoon-billed Sandpipers from hunters on Chilka Lake, especially on Nalaban Island which is less accessible to hunters. Moreover the



Asiatic Dowitchers Limnodromus semipalmatus, *Red-necked Stints* Calidris ruficollis *and Spoon-billed Sandpiper* C. pygmeus by Jan Wilczur waterfowl numbers around the island are very high and generally hunters prefer these larger birds.

Habitat change is the other major threat facing waders. Two salt industries at Point Calimere have modified the ecosystem over the years. This is largely due to the reduction of fresh water flow into the sea by reservoir bunds created by the salt industries. Storing concentrated brine for evaporation not only increases the overall salinity of the habitats, but also changes the fauna and flora in the habitat, so ultimately affecting the bird populations. Wader species, which prefer the natural intertidal habitats, have declined for several years. This may also affect both Spoon-billed Sandpipers and Asian Dowitchers as they frequent these natural habitats which are facing severe threats from local salt producers who encroach the area for extraction and raise mud bunds for storing saline water.

Aquaculture, invasion of weeds, decrease in salinity due to the closure of the lake mouth, and tourism all threaten Chilka Lake. The most significant threat to waders is, however, the closure of the lake mouth. This has resulted in the mud flats of Nalaban Island not being exposed fully, resulting in fewer waders being able to feed on them. If this situation continues, the migratory waders may have to look for other suitable staging sites for their migration.

In order to help conserve the Spoon-billed Sandpiper and Asian Dowitcher on their important stopover sites, it is recommended that illustrated pamphlets on both species be made available to the people of the coastal region, especially around the Great Vedaranyam Swamp to raise awareness. Salt industries should be advised to maintain water in the reservoirs at suitable levels for birds during periods when the reservoirs are not operating. Encroachment for salt works should be stopped immediately and the encroached areas restored. To prevent further intrusion of seawater a detailed study should be undertaken to determine how to harvest rainwater and restore the natural fresh water flow. This will improve the habitat quality and bird population.

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Conservation awareness campaign in schools and colleges of East Java, Indonesia

KSBK (Konservi Satwa Bagi Kehidupan), a Javan NGO committed to wildlife conservation, received a grant from OBC to launch a wildlife campaign at different cities in east Java. Between March and June 1997, the KSBK visited schools and colleges in Jember, Madiun, Malang and Surabaya distributing brochures, posters and newsletters about wildlife conservation. Students were shown films on Indonesian wildlife, which were very successful in stimulating discussions about wildlife preservation. It was interesting to note that many students perceived the concept of

conservation as referring to saving the natural forest and preventing pollution but not to conserving wildlife.

Students commonly asked the question why we should preserve wildlife and perceived wildlife solely in terms of its potential danger to human beings. KSBK were encouraged that their campaigns helped to change these perceptions encouraging recognition of the importance of wildlife as an integral part of conservation.

Finally, participants were taken birdwatching. This was an activity that intrigued students, as many were totally unfamiliar with the concept and were keen to participate in this 'novel practice.'

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Status of birds of the Polillo Islands, Quezon Province, Philippines

The Polillo archipelago is a cluster of about 24 islands off the east coast of Luzon Island. There are four major islands: Polillo, Patnanungan, Jomalig and Palasan. There are only three protected areas within the archipelago, which retain the remaining tracts of forest in the islands. *Carabao* logging (for use in the domestic trade) is extremely rampant on Polillo Island with the Polillo Watershed reserve being the only area where old growth lowland forest remains. There is one other reserve on Polillo (the Panukulan Watershed Forest Reserve) and the only other protected area lies on the island of Minasawa off Patnanungan (the Minasawa Game Refuge).

This study provides an assessment of the distribution of both resident and migratory birds and outlines the present status of threatened and endemic species in the Polillo islands. Standard techniques of transect counts and mist-netting were used to survey the areas. A total of 40 hours of transect counts was undertaken. 132 birds were recorded on the islands (82 species on Polillo, 57 species on Patnanungan, 43 on Jomalig and 14 in Minasawa) with all seven recognised Polillo endemic subspecies found to be still extant.

There were 16 new records of resident birds recorded for Polillo during the survey. These include three Philippine endemic species: Pygmy Swiftlet *Collocalia troglodytes*, Philippine Frogmouth *Batrachostomus septimus* and Buzzing Flowerpecker *Dicaeum hypoleucum*. Collectors and others may have overlooked some of these species in the past whilst some species such as Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* have been introduced since collectors visited the islands.

However, a total of 29 species (20 migratory species and 9 resident species) previously recorded on Polillo was not found in this survey. This list includes Philippine Fairy-Bluebird *Irena cyanogaster* endemic to the region. However, it is likely that most resident species were not recorded due to limitations of survey time in appropriate areas, and that Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* is the only resident bird to have become extirpated. Even in this instance it is possible that individuals still inhabit the northern side of the island. The survey recorded a drastic decline in some of the large and conspicuous forest species on Polillo. Philippine Cockatoo *Cacatua haematuropygia*, described as abundant by McGregor in 1910, may now have a population as low as ten. The two endemic Polillo parrot subspecies: Azure-backed Parrot *Tanygnathus sumatranus freeri* and Blue-naped parrot *Tanygnathus lucionensis hybridus* have also nearly disappeared and populations of Tarictic Hornbill *Penelopides manillae,* Philippine Scrubfowl *Megapodius cumingii* and Pied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula bicolor* have also crashed.

The survey recorded 14 species in the Polillo archipelago classified as near threatened, one endangered species, Blue-naped Parrot and two critically endangered Philippine species, Philippine Cockatoo and Woolly-necked Stork (Collar *et al.*, 1994). Habitat loss through logging activities, clearing for farmland and destruction from typhoons is cited as the major cause of the rapid decline in birds on the islands. McGregor (1910) described Polillo Island as being almost entirely covered in lowland rainforest with grasslands and clearings almost non-existent. Now that situation has been reversed. Capture of birds for the Manila pet trade is also a significant factor in the decline of parrots on the islands.

There is an immediate need to create new reserves and protected areas on the other three main islands in the Polillo group. It is recommended that reserves be established in Jomalig and Patnanungan to ensure the survival of Philippine Cockatoo, and that protection is offered to marshland in Jomalig to protect an important stronghold of the Philippine Duck *Anas luzonica.* The established reserves require further protection if species such as Philippine Cockatoo are to survive on Polillo Island. Finally, there is a need to protect seabird colonies within the smaller scattered islands on the Polillo group.

Efforts are being made by the local government to reduce the effects of severe habitat loss and over-hunting on the islands. Posters on the 'Conservation of birds in the Polillo Islands' supported through a grant from the OBC were posted in the four islands (in both English and Tagalog) in the hope of raising public environmental awareness. It is hoped that this study will help in the development of baseline data for promoting habitat preservation in these islands.

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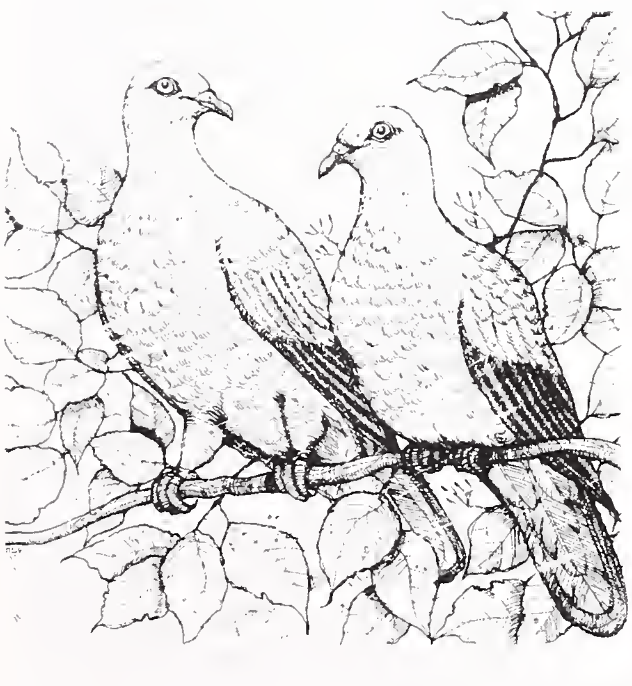


Pied Imperial Pigeon Ducula bicolor *by Sutari bin Supari*

Around the Orient

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

REGIONAL

New President of the World Pheasant Association

The World Pheasant Association (WPA) has a new International President as of 1st January 1998 in Keith Howman. He is one of the six founder members of the Association and has been the driving force behind WPA since the inaugural Council meeting in 1975, having previously held the positions of Chairman and Director-General.

The appointment is particularly appropriate since his latest book, *The Atlas of Rare Pheasants, Volume 1* has just been published.

Keith takes on the position of President on the retirement of Professor Cheng Tso-hsin, China's leading ornithologist and a world leader in bird conservation. A graduate at 19, and a doctor and professor at 23, Cheng has dedicated his life to the study of China's avifauna, and has been the inspiration for many of its young scientists. In recognition of this, and all the enthusiasm and encouragement that he has brought to the World Pheasant Association, Keith recently presented Professor Cheng with a signed copy of *The Atlas of Rare Pheasants* for the library of the Chinese Institute of Zoology in Beijing. Professor Cheng has accepted the honour of becoming President Emeritus of the World Pheasant Association.

CHINA

Yellow River Delta identified as an important site for waders

Australian wader watchers have declared the Yellow River Delta the most important shorebird site on the East Asian / Australasian flyway after they surveyed the area with Chinese colleagues in April / May 1997. They logged 130,000 waders of 38 species in a two week period and considered this a considerable underestimate. An extrapolated figure of 500,000 shorebirds on northward migration includes an estimated 13,500 Little Curlew *Numenius minutus*, making this the first major Little Curlew staging site identified. Large numbers of Saunders's Gulls *Larus saundersi* were also recorded at the Huang He Nature Reserve which has a 140 kilometre shoreline. A further 15 shorebird species were also present in internationally significant numbers, including Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* and Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*.

The Australasian Wader Study Group also visited Chongming Dao on the Yangtze estuary and estimated 200,000 northbound shorebirds could be using the site including significant numbers of Spoon-billed Sandpipers *Calidris pygmeus*.

The team also logged Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* and Hooded Crane *Grus monacha* at the site. The Shanghai Provincial Government has announced that the prime wader habitat at Chongming Dao will be declared a nature reserve.

Source: *The Tattler* (No. 13, Nov 1997)

HONG KONG

Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay to become a Ramsar site

The Chinese Government has confirmed that Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay will become the country's seventh Ramsar site. Britain had already designated them as Hong Kong's first Ramsar site in 1995 but it was unclear if the post-colonial administration would agree.

The Ramsar Bureau says China's Ministry of Forestry has written to confirm the designation, which is welcome news of Beijing's commitment to the conservation of this internationally important wetland which is now under intense development pressure from its northern, mainland China side.

Source: *The Tattler* (No. 13, Nov 1997)

And news from Mai Po will no doubt figure prominently on the Hong Kong Birdwatching Society's website. Birders with access to the Internet will be interested to learn that they can now visit Hong Kong without leaving home. The website features the latest HK bird news, besides details of birding sites around the former colony, bird photos and a bulletin board for questions and answers from birders in Hong Kong and further afield. The website address is: http://home.hkstar.com/~hkbws E-mail: hkbws@hkstar.com

Source: *Eurobirdnet email discussion group*

INDIA

Indian Bird Trade continues

Since 1991 there has been a complete ban on the trapping and trade of Indian wild birds. But the ban appears to be only on paper since the illegal trade in wild birds flourishes in almost all cities, towns and villages of India. Traditional trappers continue to trade because their livelihoods depend on it.

A 1997 report *Live Bird Trade in Northern India* by Abrar Ahmed and published by TRAFFIC India is based on the findings of surveys carried out in 57 trading establishments and trapping areas in 36 cities of northern India. The survey findings reveal that at least 250 species were being traded in northern India. The bulk of the trade was in parakeets and munias with the Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* comprising 27%, Black-headed Munia *Lonchura malacca* 18% and Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava* 11% of the birds traded. An alarming finding was that three globally threatened endemic species of the Indian subcontinent, Swamp Francolin *Francolinus gularis*, Green Avadavat *Amandava formosa* and Finn's Weaver *Ploceus megarhynchus* were traded in local markets. The survey also showed that a number of species controlled by CITES and Indian legislation were being traded.

The sad fact which has emerged from the survey is that only a few masterminds have gained from the trade, whilst most of the traditional trappers continue to be poor. The ban on the trade came into force almost overnight, and tribal people that have engaged in it for centuries were not given any alternative sources of employment, and had no other option but to illegally trap birds. The report highlights that regular smuggling of birds continues despite the ban, mostly routed clandestinely through Nepal and Pakistan. Stricter enforcement and proper training for the authorities could well curb this illegal trade. At the same time a humane approach should be adopted towards the impoverished bird trappers. Some kind of rehabilitation programme is urgently required for them.

Contributed by Carol Inskipp

Siberian Cranes harassed at Bharatpur

During a visit to Bharatpur, OBC member William S. Clark observed the recently arrived Siberian Cranes *Grus leucogeranus* being harassed. He writes: I visited the Keoladeo National Park on 17th November 1997. The family of three Siberian Cranes had arrived there the day before and were feeding in one of the grassy fields. The next day, I saw the three of them trying to land, but there were more than fifteen local people in the field cutting grass. I mentioned this to the Park Manager, Mrs Sharma, who was already aware of the situation. The grass cutters were in this area on and off over the next three days, after which time I left.

When I returned in mid-December, the cranes had settled into another field, and the grass cutters were still working in the original field. I estimate that on any given day, there are over 300 local

Siberian Crane Grus Leuco leucogeranus *harassed by grasscutter's dog at Bharatpur* people in the Park cutting grass, herding cattle, or gathering firewood. As a designated national park, all of these activities are against Indian law, but the management seem unable or unwilling to stop these illegal activities.

My colleague, Dr Vibhu Prakash, gave me a photograph of a local dog that was chasing one of the captive bred Siberian Cranes (see p. 17). I noted dogs in the Park on two occasions during my six days there.

The Bombay Natural History Society is conducting a study of the winter ecology of several raptors, including the Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*. This includes monitoring their night roost in the grassland areas of the Park. However, for the past two years, the local people have harvested the grass in the main roost area and disturbed the roost, and of course had a negative impact on the BNHS survey. The BNHS had requested that the park management stop the cutting in 1997, but to no avail.

The Keoladeo National Park at Bharatpur in Rajasthan is an Indian national treasure of international importance, but is it being managed in an acceptable manner?

Contributed by William S. Clark

Digboi Oilfields to be declared as a Nature Reserve

The Indian Oil Corporation (Assam Oil Division) and Oil India are to be congratulated on initiating moves to declare the Digboi oilfields (in eastern Assam) as a nature reserve. A team from the OBC (consisting of Krys Kazmierczak, Desmond Allen, Paul Holt, Jon Hornbuckle and Ashley Banwell) found almost 200 species around the IOC campus and site oilfield forests during a week long survey in March 1998. Of particular note was the healthy population of Collared Treepies *Dendrocitta frontalis* which has been suggested as the mascot for the proposed reserve. Other resident species include Wreathed *Aceros undulatus*, Oriental Pied *Anthracoceros albirostris* and Great Hornbills *Buceros bicornis*, Grey Peacock Pheasant *Polyplectron bicalcaratum*, White-cheeked Partridge *Arborophila atrogularis*, Pied Falconet *Microhierax melanoleucos*, Spotted Wren-Babbler *Spelaeornis formosus* and Chestnut-backed Laughingthrush *Garrulax nuchalis*. Calls probably ascribable to Blue-naped Pitta *Pitta nipalensis* were also heard in the oilfield. The White-winged Duck *Cairina scutulata* encountered during a brief visit two years previously was unfortunately not observed during the present survey.

There are plans to implement measures to prevent further encroachment of the forest and to undertake some reforestation with native species, as well as to promote more awareness among the local people. WWF-India and the Forest Department are co-operating on the project.

Contributed by Krys Kazmierczak

Edible-nest Swiftlets

The impact of nest collection on the Edible-nest Swiftlet Collocalia fuciphaga *in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands* by Ravi Sankaran, has recently been published by the Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History in Coimbatore, India.

The nests of the Edible-nest Swiftlet are made entirely of hardened saliva and, as an important item in Chinese cuisine, rank amongst the world's most expensive animal products. The species is not protected in India nor subject to international controls. The author classifies it as critically endangered in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, with about 4,620 pairs in the former and 2,010 pairs in the latter. The populations have been reduced by an estimated 80% and can no longer sustain collection of the nests.

He recommends that the species should be fully protected by Indian legislation and that measures should include checks for smuggled nests at sea- and airports. He also suggests the setting up of an *ex-situ* conservation programme, whereby eggs of the Edible-nest Swiftlet would be cross-fostered with those of the Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*, a species that is common and readily nests in darkened rooms of buildings. This technique has been successfully used in Indonesia to establish breeding colonies of Edible-nest Swiftlets in buildings, where they can be protected easily and managed sustainably.

Contributed by Tim Inskipp

MALAYSIA

Highland resorts road project a threat to montane rainforest areas

It will be 220 kilometres long, swallow up 1,000 hectares of montane oak forest and cost 2.25 billion ringgit...if it is built.

The Highland Resorts Road (HRR) is a pet project of Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad: a two-lane highway which would link the hill resorts of Genting Highlands, Fraser's Hill and Cameron Highlands.

Dr Mahathir admits the road is expensive and even that there is little demand for it! 'It is costly because the Government wants to protect the environment of the highlands. The number of vehicles which will use the highway when it is completed will be few and the returns for the project will be small.' (*The Star*, 12/8/94).

The road would run through prime habitat for two charismatic Malaysian species: the endemic Mountain Peacock Pheasant *Polypectron inopinatum* and the scarce Rusty-naped Pitta *Pitta oatesi* in addition to another 140 species dependent on montane forest. There are even Tigers *Panthera tigris* in the highland forests and a host of endemic reptiles and amphibians.

Under Malaysian law an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the road is required. The Save the Main Range Campaign has already made its own assessment and forecasts that a 50 metre wide road bulldozed along 200 km of mountain slope will cut across most of the river catchments in three states: Perak, Pahang and Selangor. Twenty-one river basins will be affected.

As the proposed road will run along steep slopes of between 30 and 50 degrees at an elevation of 1,000 to 1,250 m, the threat of widespread soil erosion, river siltation and frequent landslides seems very real.

Save the Main Range is asking opponents of the Highland Resorts Road to write to the Malaysian government. The Campaign is based at the Consumers' Association of Penang (Tel 04-229-3511/Fax 04-229-8106/E-mail mdidris@cap.po.my).

Source: *Save the Main Range Campaign newsletter*

MYANMAR (BURMA)

Land set aside for Biosphere Reserve

One million hectares of virgin forest in peninsular Myanmar has been set aside as a biosphere reserve by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). A cause for celebration? Not if you are one of the 2,000 Karen people massacred by SLORC troops as the area is cleared for ecotourists. A further 30,000 Karen have fled across the border into Thailand.

The area earmarked for the Myinmoletkat reserve stretches 50 miles from Mergui in the south to Ye in the north. However, the people who lived there have either been driven out of the forest by the army or have been used as forced labour building a railway line north to Ye.

Offshore, people living on the coral island of Lanbi Kyun have also been killed if they refused to move out from what SLORC is now touting as another ecotourist destination, the Lanbi Island Marine National Park.

VIETNAM

Seminar on threatened Vietnamese lowland pheasants: Hanoi, 18th September 1997

Some 50 experts from 7 countries (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, UK, Netherlands, France, USA) held a meeting with the National Environment Agency (NEA) in the offices of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (MoSTE) in Hanoi on Thursday 18th September, through the kind permission of the Hanoi People's Committee. The subject for discussion was the conservation of three rare types of pheasants which have only ever occurred in the Annamese lowlands of central Vietnam. Edwards's Pheasant *Lophura edwardsi* and Imperial Pheasant *L. imperialis* were first collected and described in the 1920s by the French zoologist Jean Delacour. Edwards's Pheasant was believed to be extinct in the wild until late 1996, when several birds were trapped in areas within both Thua Thien Hue and Quang Tri Provinces, to the north of Bach Ma National Park.

BirdLife International Vietnam Programme is now planning to survey this area more thoroughly and then make a proposal for a protected area to safeguard the future of this population. The larger Imperial Pheasant, which has a dark crest of feathers on top of its head instead of the white of the Edwards's Pheasant, is only known from two skins collected by Delacour over 70 years ago in unknown locations, and from two birds trapped in the early 1990s in

Ha Tinh Province. In 1964 Professor Dang Huy Huynh discovered Vietnamese Pheasant *L. hatinhensis*, which has white central tail feathers as well as the white crest, and is of a similar size to Edwards's Pheasant. In 1994-5 a population of this bird was found near the Ke Go Lake. As a result of work by BirdLife, this area was declared a Nature Reserve by the Vietnamese Government in December 1996. Although these three birds differ in their size and plumage characteristics, recent analysis of DNA sequences in Italy by Professor Ettore Randi has revealed only minute differences between them, on a scale normally associated with subspecies. It was concluded that for the present they should be treated as three independent species, at least until some further work on their genetic differences has been completed. The seminar participants agreed that all three of these pheasants should be placed in the 'critically endangered' category of the IUCN Red List, implying that they are all in grave danger of global extinction in the near future, unless positive steps are taken. This categorisation implies that they all have a 50% chance of becoming extinct in the next ten years. They also urged that all known localities for these birds be given maximum protection, and that further surveys of all unexplored forest fragments in this area are undertaken, as soon as possible. In addition, all possible ways of involving local people in the campaign to save these pheasants should be explored, through education, better forest management, the provision of new technologies and the development of a better standard of living that does not require further exploitation of natural resources. Both Edwards's Pheasant and Vietnamese Pheasant are held in captivity in some numbers. The seminar participants urged that these populations be managed very carefully and separately, in order to preserve as much of their genetic diversity as possible. Then if efforts to save these birds in the wild fail, at least we will still have representative captive populations to preserve for future generations.

This seminar, organised by Dr Peter J. Garson on behalf of the IUCN Pheasant Specialist Group, would not have taken place but for the assistance of Nguyen Cu (BirdLife Vietnam Programme, Hanoi) and Le Sy Thuc (Director, Hanoi Zoo) in making arrangements with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (MoSTE) and the People's Committee of Hanoi. The IUCN is also extremely grateful for financial support for this event from Price Waterhouse (Chartered Accountants) and the World Pheasant Association.

Source: *Dr Peter J. Garson, Chairman, IUCN Pheasant Specialist Group*

Swamp Francolin Francolinus gularis *by Hil Bruinsma*

Some observations of the Green Avadavat in the Indian bird trade

There is great concern over the conservation and status of the Green Avadavat *Amandava formosa*. Indeed it was proposed and unanimously accepted for inclusion in CITES Appendix II at the recent 1997 Conference in Zimbabwe.

Although little is known of its habits in the wild, and despite the ban on both the trade and export of this species from India, the Green Avadavat is still prominently showing up in international bird markets. Since it is known to be a poor breeder in captivity, its continued presence in international markets suggests many are wild-caught birds.

This article is based on an ongoing countrywide study of TRAFFIC - India on the live bird trade in India, undertaken by the author, since December 1992. The study aims to determine the status of the bird trade in India after the total ban in 1991. The methodology involves surveys of bird markets with a significant trade history, field visits to the capture sites, interviews with traders, trappers, bird keepers and collating data and information from seizure figures.

Seven species of munias are found in the Indian subcontinent.[1] Six of these have been found in the Indian bird trade. The Green Avadavat is a highly sought-after cage bird both for domestic and international markets, second only to breeding males of Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava*. Its rarity is one of the reasons for its high desirability.[2]

It is a small bird of about 10 cm, olive-green above, with a pale yellow throat and the breast, centre of belly and undertail-coverts are bright yellow. The flanks are barred with olive-brown and white. The female is similar to the male but is browner above, duller and paler below, the flanks with fewer and less obvious bars.

According to the BirdLife classification,[3] the Green Avadavat is listed as *Vulnerable* in the C1 and C2a categories (C1 = continuing decline in population, C2a = severe fragmentation). It belongs to Schedule IV of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, whereby hunting and trapping of this species is totally prohibited.

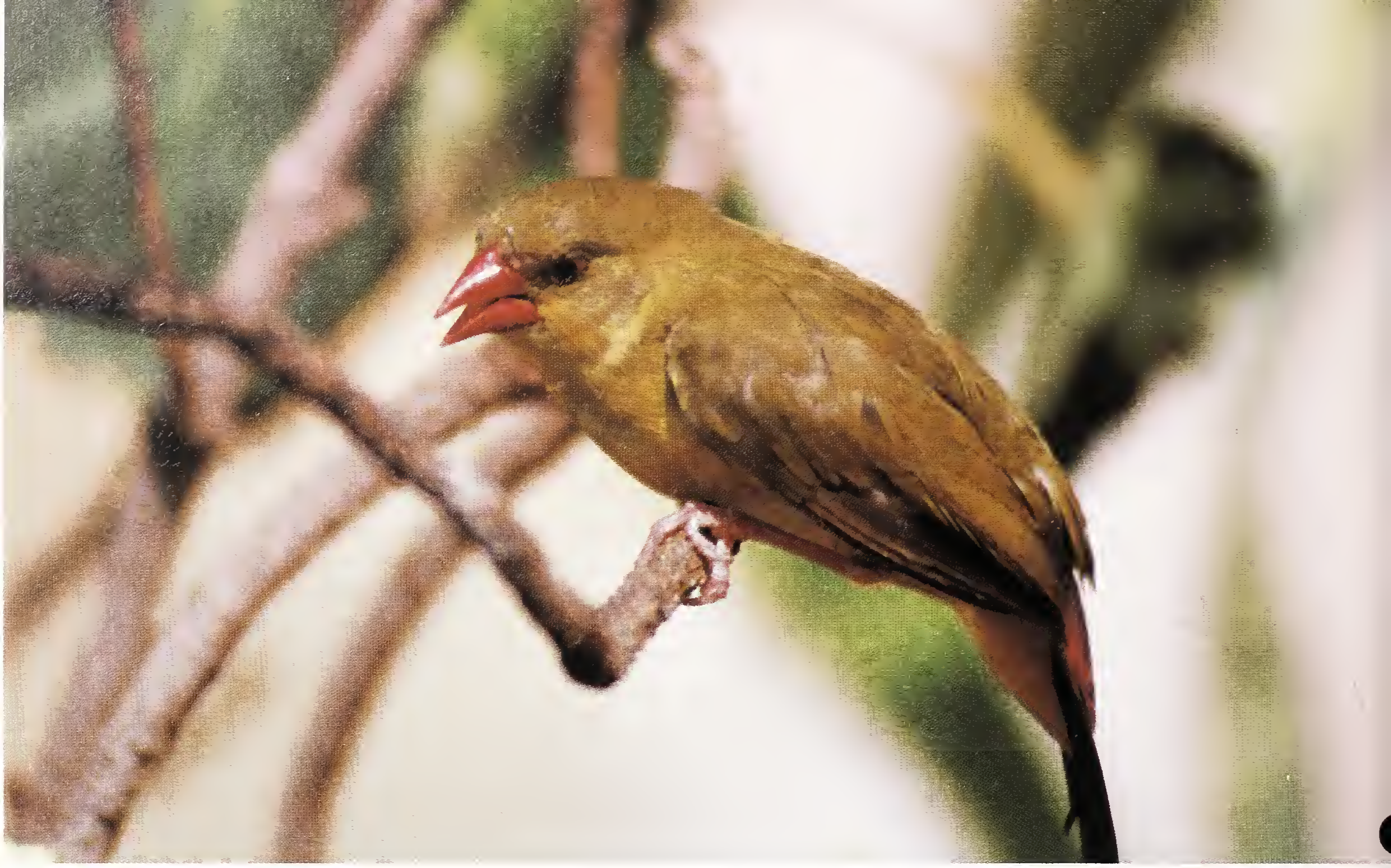
According to Ali and Ripley[1] the Green Avadavat is 'very locally and unevenly distributed. It is found mainly in central India from Mt Abu, Gwalior, Jhansi and Surguja south to Mahabaleshwar, Utnur and the Vishakapatnam Ghats. It is also recorded from Lucknow and Lahore and from Bihar.' A small breeding colony which was formerly present in Lahore, Pakistan, is believed to have resulted from escaped cage birds.[3,4]

My visits to Lucknow and information from Mt Abu indicate that most isolated populations near these places and from many areas of Madhya Pradesh have already disappeared. It seems that trapping may be a major threat to Green Avadavat populations. The bulk of the trapping at present is carried out by trappers from Lucknow, Bihar and Calcutta (West Bengal). The trappers sell their birds to regional dealers who in turn send them on. The most frequently visited state for trapping is Madhya Pradesh especially the Raigarh, Bhopal, Indore and Katni areas.

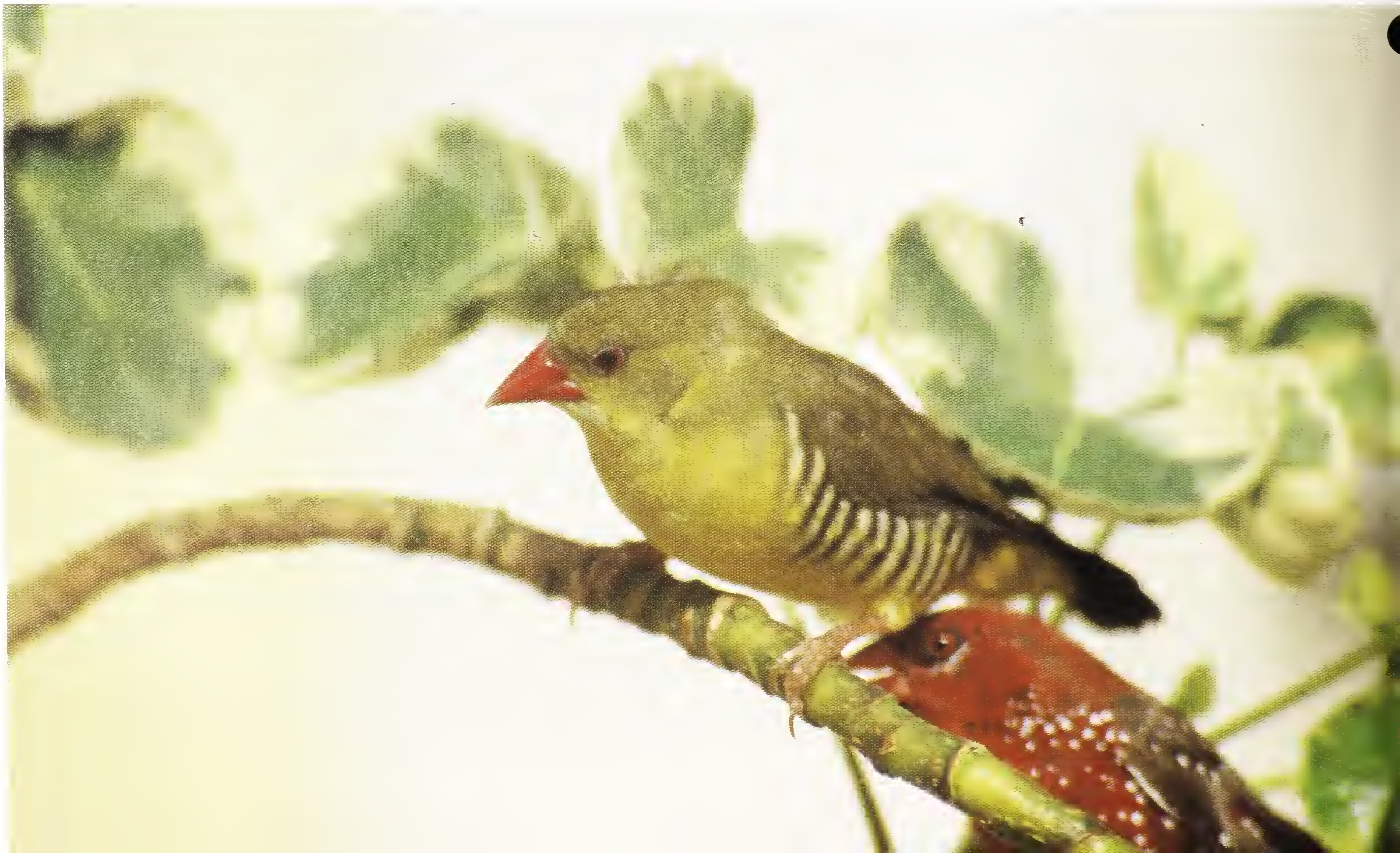
During the first week of June 1994, I conducted a short field survey in the Tikamgarh district of Madhya Pradesh and the Jhansi district of Uttar Pradesh. The avadavat trappers of that area were once the main suppliers of Green Avadavats to northern Indian bird dealers. My extensive search with the most knowledgeable and experienced trappers of that area resulted in us locating a small, isolated population of about 60-70 birds on Chatarpur road in Tikamgarh district. The habitat was stony, arid waste land and the birds were confined to a home range of less than 1 km^2.

It was the non-breeding season and flocks of up to seven birds were regularly sighted between 05.45 and 18.15 hours. During the hot period of the day, the birds gathered and rested in small shrubs of *Ipomoea*, from around 09.00 until 15.00 hours. The resting site was cool due to the presence of water and vegetation such as *Madhuca latifolia*, *Syzygium cumini* and it was bordered with *Ficus* sp. on both sides. Unfortunately, it took less than two days for the trappers to wipe out this small population.

Other birds seen in the vicinity and sharing the same resources were the Red Avadavat, Scaly-



1: Female Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava* dyed. Note the red rump feathers.
(Photo: Abrar Ahmed)
2: Male Green Avadavat *Amandava formosa*.
(Photo: Abrar Ahmed)



breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*, Indian Silverbill *L. malabarica*, Black-headed Munia *L. malacca*, Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*, Black-breasted Weaver *P. benghalensis* and Streaked Weaver *P. manyar*.

Green Avadavats generally keep apart from other species while resting and foraging. They rarely roost communally with Red Avadavats in sugarcane fields. The trappers told me that although they regularly caught munias roosting in large congregations in sugarcane fields, they very rarely trapped Green Avadavats there.

Two methods are generally used for trapping. One method is the double bamboo net often used during daytime and sometimes modified into one bamboo net having only one functional side. The second method sometimes used for Green Avadavat but widely used for other gregarious munias is the funnel net usually used during the night. The net is placed hidden with the help of two bamboo poles to the sides of a medium height shrub. The birds are then driven slowly towards the net, which is closed with the two bamboo poles and searched for trapped birds.

The former method is quite simple. A small patch of the foraging area is chosen and baited with bird seed and sometimes two or three birds are also kept there as decoys. Once the birds get accustomed to the foraging area, the well camouflaged net is placed and the trapper waits for the birds. Once the birds land and start feeding, the string is pulled, closing the net. Such a net can catch up to 30-40 birds at a time although Green Avadavats do not congregate in such numbers and a maximum up to 5-6 birds are caught using this method.

Once caught, the birds are usually kept as pairs since there is a tendency in this species for intra-specific fights that can lead to baldness around the neck and head regions due to the constant pecking by dominant individuals. This can sometimes bring heavy losses to traders as many individuals may become unfit for trade. Most of these uncommercial individuals are either kept separate until they moult or they are sold off as release birds. This could be one of the reasons why escaped birds are found around Delhi and other places. Traders who stock large numbers may keep them together for a month or two at first but otherwise tend to mix them with Red Avadavats so that intra-specific fighting is minimised. The species needs great care and is very prone to stress. During my study it was observed that there can be high mortalities, especially during the first night of capture.

During my market studies, I found Green Avadavats on several occasions (see Table 1). Analysis of the bird trade revealed about 3,500 avadavats seen in 14 surveys in nine different places. The maximum number of about 2,000 Green Avadavats was seen at Kanta-toli bird market in the Ranchi district of Bihar. These birds were caught between the Orissa and Madhya Pradesh districts. The presence of Green Avadavats mainly from May to August shows that the trapping season is around May-June with most birds sold by September.

According to my survey analysis for the northern Indian bird trade, which excludes data from other regions, the percentage of Green Avadavats in comparison to the six other species of munias in trade is about 4% and, according to the data from birds seized in the northern region from 1989 to 1995, the percentage of Green Avadavats accounts for about 2% among the six munia species in trade.

Since the Green Avadavat has a red bill and iris and a black tail, all features which are common to the Red Avadavat, in the earlier days of its exportation, it was customary for traders to colour female Red Avadavats with a light green dye and pass them off as Green Avadavats. This practice has in fact contributed to the trade name of this species of *hara lal* or green-red. Nowadays, this bird is often coloured up to look like a female Red Avadavat, or misdeclared by giving it a false name or by otherwise changing its appearance. Traders can benefit from this in both ways. Firstly, by passing

Table 1: Result of market surveys October 1992 to September 1996[2]

Month and Year	Place and state	Number estimated
October 1992	Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh	50
September 1993	Meerut, Uttar Pradesh	750
September 1993	Patna, Bihar	30-40
September 1993	Calcutta, West Bengal	present
May 1994	Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh	40
June 1994	Tikamgarh, Madhya Pradesh	60
July 1994	Ambala, Haryana	30
September 1994	Delhi	200
June 1995	Patna, Bihar	present
June 1995	Ranchi, Bihar	2,000
July 1995	Calcutta, West Bengal	100
August 1995	Delhi	150
Jan-Feb 1996	Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh	25
February 1996	Bombay	present
September 1996	Kathmandu, Nepal	present

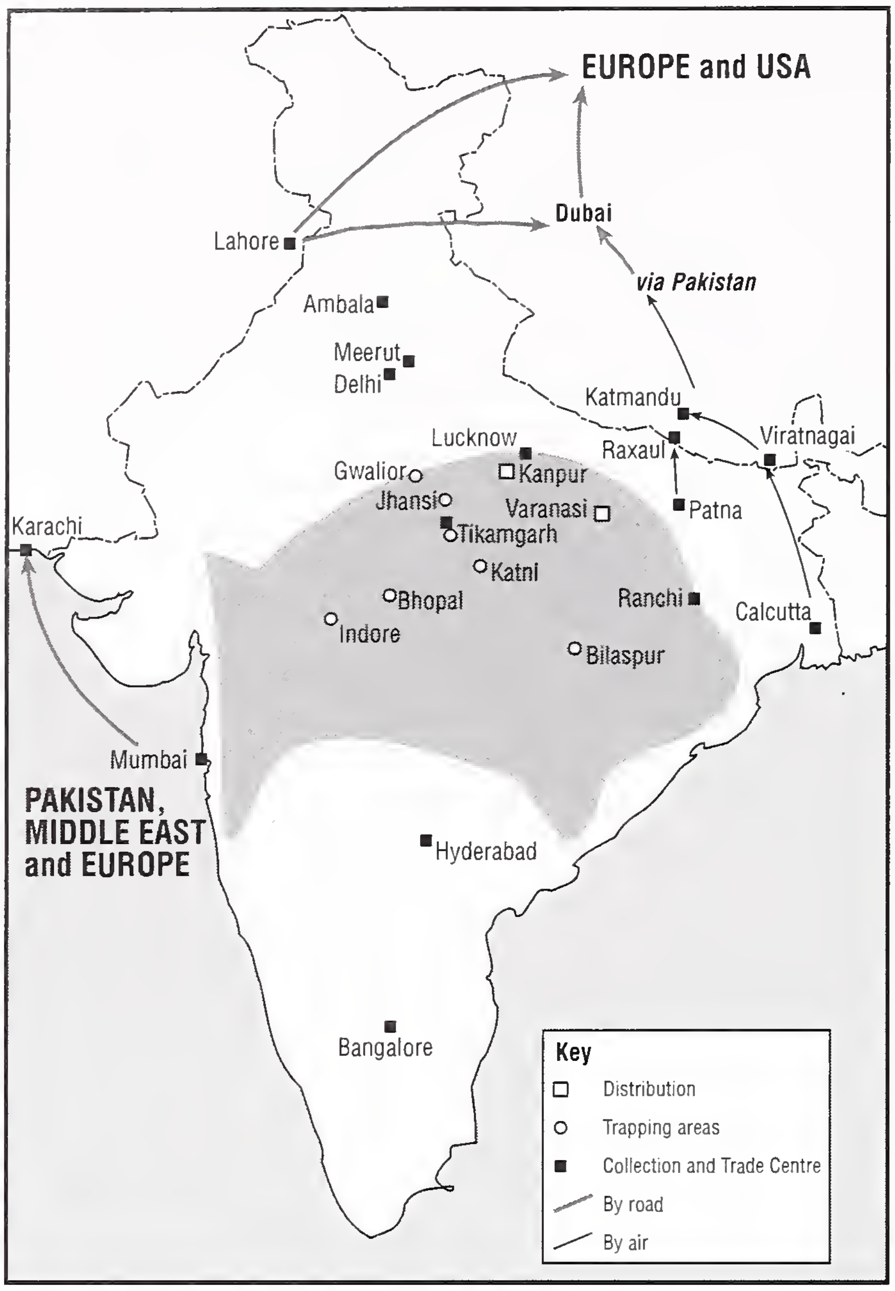


Figure 1: *Distribution of Green Avadavat showing main trapping centres and exportation routes.*

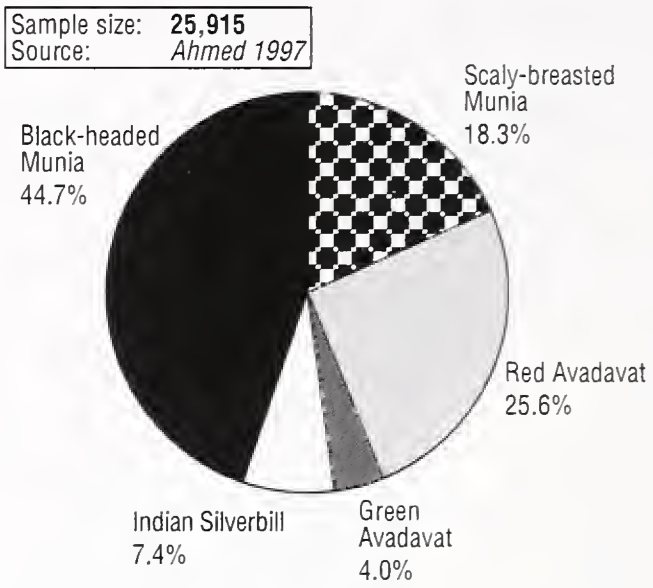


Figure 2: *Composition of munias according to TRAFFIC India Survey data*

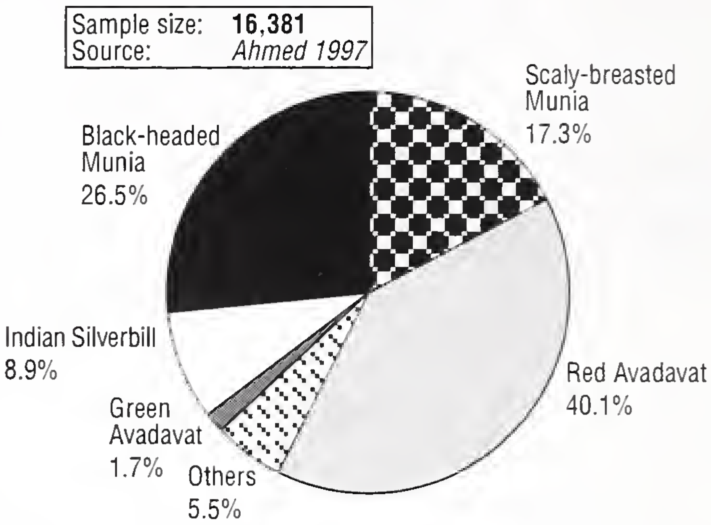


Figure 3: *Composition of munias seized during 1989-1995 in Northern India*

Red Avadavat females off as Green Avadavats, they are able to sell them at higher prices. Secondly, by passing Green Avadavats off as Red Avadavats, they are able to save themselves from prosecution for trading in rare and protected species.

Before 1990, when the legal trade in Red Avadavats was stopped, Green Avadavats were exported, mixed in with green-coloured Red Avadavat females. On inspection at airports, the green-dyed Red Avadavat females were declared as such, claiming that no Green Avadavats were being transported and thus duping the enforcement authorities.

Green Avadavats continue to be in great demand in foreign bird markets, leading to continued smuggling of this species to Europe and America. A minimum of 2,000-3,000 individuals are smuggled out annually for the pet-trade under the name of 'Tiger finch' which refers to the zebra stripes on the flanks of this species. Few attempts have been made to breed this bird in captivity in India although breeders in Calcutta have reportedly bred it occasionally. The current availability of wild birds at cheap rates does not lure breeders into regarding this as a serious captive-breeding candidate.

The major trade routes investigated during the study reveal that the birds first reach Kathmandu from Bihar and West Bengal and are then further exported from Nepal. From Kathmandu the birds are sent by air to Dubai *via* Pakistan, from where they are distributed to various countries. The moment these birds cross the Indian border, there is no restriction or law that can control the trade in this species, an advantage that is exploited by the traders.

Future threats to the Green Avadavat population

There is a need for a fully fledged project on the species to study various aspects of this bird, both with respect to its biology and the impact of trapping on the species. Trapping pressure is very high in some parts of its range and trappers can wipe out small populations easily. Other factors of concern are the restricted distribution and the extensive use of pesticides and insecticides in its habitat. I have observed Green Avadavats drinking irrigation water during my survey.

Habitat alteration and destruction are also other important factors.

According to a preliminary survey and interviews held with Green Avadavat trappers, it seems that the overall habitat for Green Avadavats may actually be shrinking. The species is usually observed in scrubland and grasslands which are fast decreasing in extent due to their conversion into agricultural land. The Red Avadavat has adapted well to crop fields and sugarcane plantations but the Indian Silverbill, a scrubland species, has not coped quite so well with the sugarcane plantations, and this could well be the case with the Green Avadavat.

Field surveys indicate a severely fragmented population, although more thorough surveys need to be carried out to ascertain if this is a true picture.

It is highly recommended that the Green Avadavat should be upgraded from Schedule IV to Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, giving it the highest protection. International trade in this species can only be controlled if an effective ban is enforced in the SAARC countries. Strict checking at domestic outlets at regular intervals, and harsh punishment for trading in threatened species needs to be enforced. Alternative schemes at the grassroots level, employing people as field assistants, could help curtail the trade. Unless serious efforts are made to save the Green Avadavat, it may slowly disappear forever.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely thankful to Dr Asad R. Rahmani, former Chairman of the Centre of Wildlife & Ornithology and now Director, Bombay Natural History Society, for his supervision, guidance and editorial review throughout my studies. I thank Mr Samar Singh, Secretary General, WWF-India and Mr Manoj Misra, Director TRAFFIC-India for allowing me to undertake the surveys. I also thank Lt. Col. Gautam Das (Retired) for his suggestions and help. Lastly, I owe a special thanks to all the indigenous bird trappers who shared their knowledge and help during my surveys.

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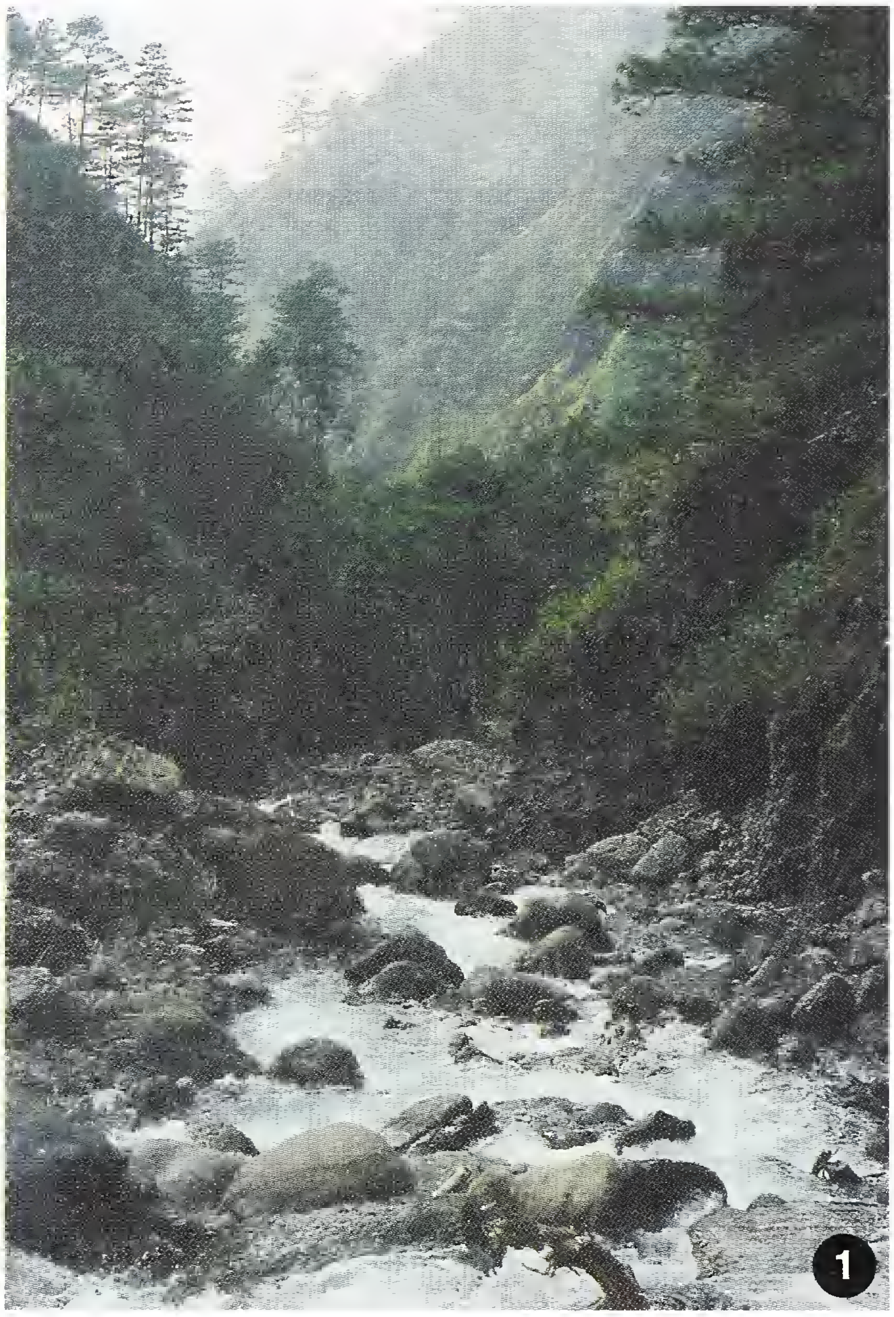


1: River near Atapuan at 1,200 m, habitat for the endemic Luzon Water Redstart *Rhyacornis bicolor*. (Photo: Michael Køie Poulsen)

2: Deforested mountains beyond Mt Pulog National Park. (Photo: Michael Køie Poulsen)

3: Luzon Water Redstart *Rhyacornis bicolor*, Mt Pulog National Park. (Photo: Michael Køie Poulsen)

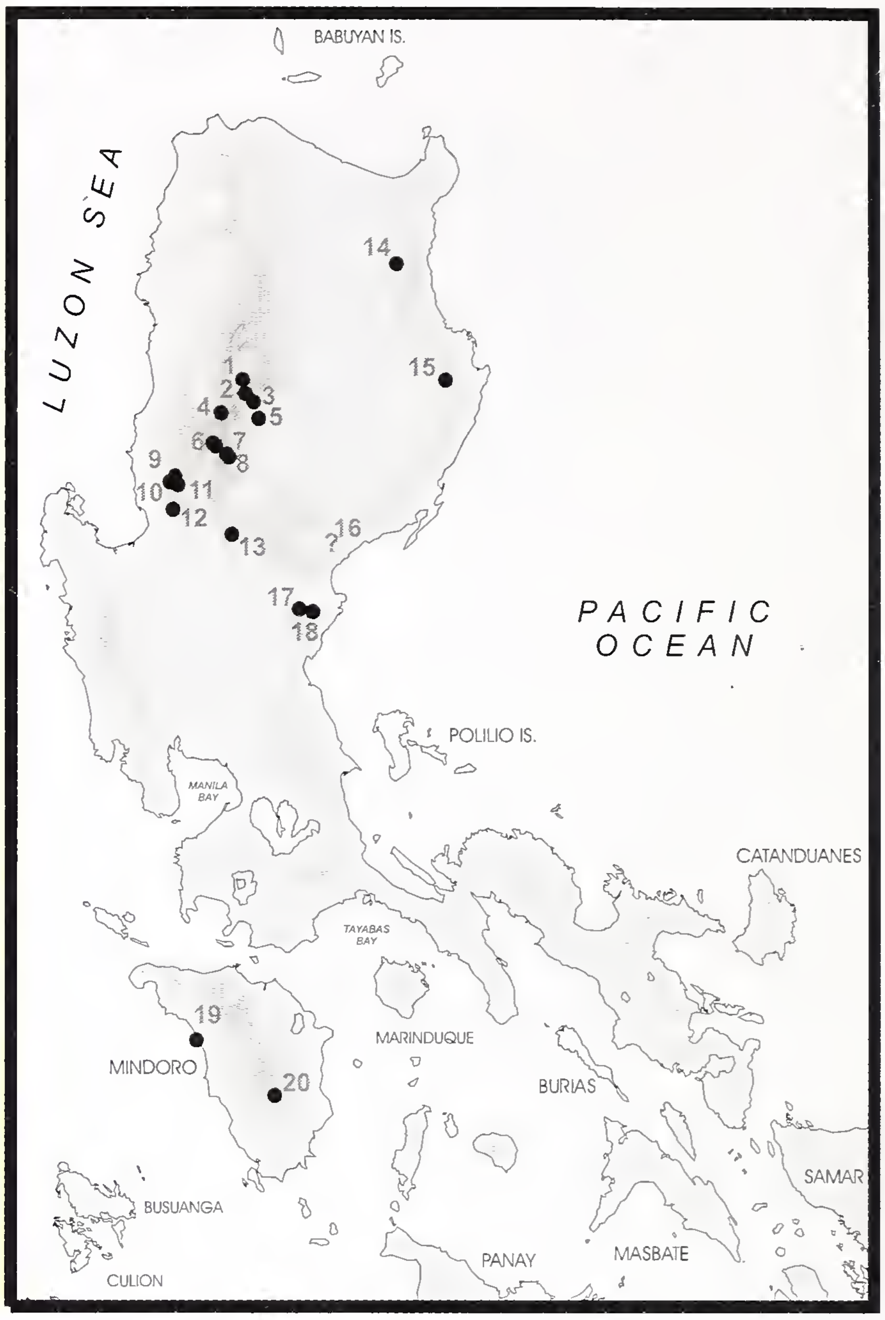
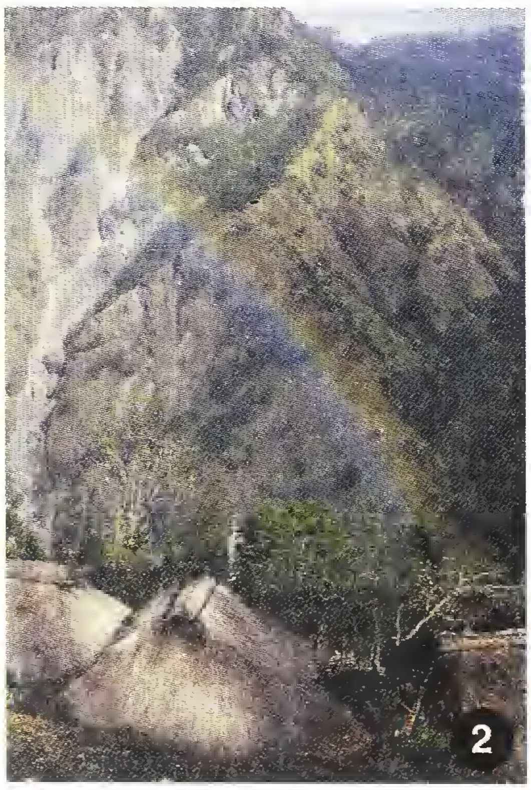
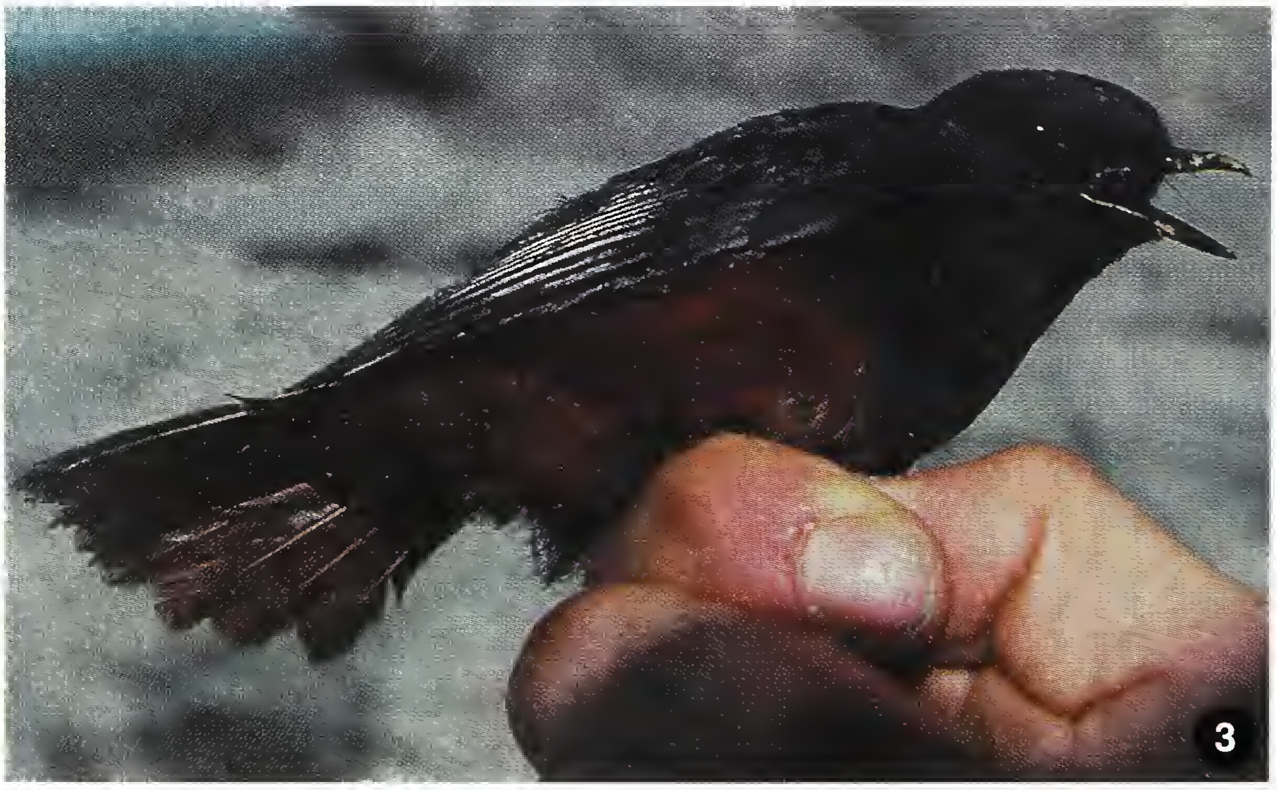


Figure 1: *Map showing localities where Luzon Water Redstart has been recorded, namely: 1 Talubin bridge; 2 Mt Polis; 3 Banaue; 4 Mt Data; 5 Lagawe Gorge; 6 Lutab; 7 Kabayan; 8 Mt Pulog National Park; 9 La Trinidad; 10 Irisan; 11 Baguio; 12 Bued River canyon; 13 Dalton Pass; 14 Naganduyan; 15 Mt Palanan; 16 unspecified site in Quirino subprovince; 17 Maria Aurora Memorial National Park; 18 Diteki; 19 Tilago; and 20 Mt Roosevelt.*





Little-known Oriental bird

Luzon Water Redstart *Rhyacornis bicolor*

Nigel Collar gives an overview of the status and distribution of a threatened Philippine endemic streamside species about which still much needs to be learned on its distribution and ecology.

Birds colonised the Philippine archipelago by several routes. Some came up from Sulawesi or else Borneo, and some came down across the South China Sea from Asia. In some cases the invaders clearly spread everywhere, but in others they got no further than the first main island they reached. We see this in the Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* on Luzon and Mindanao Lorikeet *Trichoglossus johnstoniae* on Mindanao, two forms whose ancestors derived from lands further north and further south respectively.[1] The Luzon Water Redstart *Rhyacornis bicolor* falls into this pattern, as it shows only minor development – colours more intense, chestnut more extensive on the belly, female like a pale male rather than having a distinct plumage – from an immigrant stock of Plumbeous Water Redstarts *R. fuliginosus*, a species that ranges from the Himalayas through most of China onto Taiwan[2] but whose representatives, on reaching and speciating on Luzon, apparently went no further.

However, while Plumbeous Water Redstart is a familiar enough species for most Asian birdwatchers, Luzon Water Redstart is decidedly not. This is in part a consequence of the relative scarcity of ornithological attractions in the highlands of Luzon, but it is also true that those highlands are not always easy of access and that the target species is nothing like so easy to encounter. It certainly has a highly restricted range, whose core (sites 1-13 on Figure 1) covers an area no bigger than Yorkshire in the U.K., and outside of this area the chances of finding it seem – although perhaps this is only an illusion – to be very small indeed.

It was the indefatigable explorer John Whitehead who, arriving at La Trinidad in Benguet on the last day of 1893,[3a] found the first Luzon Water Redstart a few days later as he prospected the adjacent area, his collector shooting one 'among some huge boulders in a mountain-torrent'.[3b] A year later he penetrated further north to Mt Data and re-encountered the species in good numbers, collecting 14 specimens in as many days, at 1,500 to 1,820 m.[4] D. S. Rabor was to find the water redstart on Data again in April–May 1946,[5] but since then nobody appears even to have looked.

In the first decade of the century the species was found at four more sites (Lutab, Irisan, Baguio and the Bued River canyon) in Benguet, and in 1948 at another (Kabayan).[4] At none of these places, however, has it been reported subsequently. In the 1960s four birds were collected at Dalton Pass, but no evidence of large-scale intra-island movement was discovered as it was for certain other Philippine endemic species.[1,4] Nobody appears to have recorded the bird in the 1970s, but then came the era of the birdwatcher. Tim Fisher found birds at Banaue in Ifugao province in 1981 and south of Mt Data at Lagawe Gorge in 1985.[6] Thereafter records came from Talubin Bridge just north of Mt Polis,[7] from Mt Polis itself,[6] notably at Bay-yo, and from Mt Pulog in the national park at several sites.[8,9] Mt Polis, Banaue and Mt Pulog have proved to be the places at which visiting birders have been successful in finding the species in the 1990s.

We certainly tend to think of the Luzon Water Redstart as a bird of the Cordillera Central (localities 1–13 in Figure 1). However, the situation is more complicated. To begin with, there have been records from five sites in the Sierra Madre (localities 14–18 in Figure 1) since 1987, three of them during 1997. Then, much more surprising, the Philippine National Museum proves to possess two specimens collected in the 1960s on Mindoro – one at Tilago near the west coast (surprisingly low but presumably some way inland) in June 1965, and one on Mt Roosevelt in July 1963. Aldrin Mallari found the skins in April 1996 when Dr Pedro Gonzales kindly allowed us full access to the collection to work on *Threatened birds of the Philippines*; for 35 years this notable range extension went unpublished, emerging for the first time in a table of restricted-range species in BirdLife's *Endemic Bird Areas of the world* earlier this year.[10]

So the Luzon Water Redstart is *not* a Luzon endemic after all. The questions of course now must be (a) whether the birds on Mindoro represented residents or migrants, and (b) whether the species occurs even more widely. Although we tend to think of the Philippines as reasonably well known, thanks in large part to another indefatigable explorer, D. S. Rabor, the truth is that they are not, and it is very likely that a good number of novelties and range extensions remain to be discovered by fieldworkers prepared to work hard and high in little known parts of all the large islands. It is by no means impossible that the water redstart will be found on yet more islands, and indeed on mountains such as Sicapo-o in the northern part of the Cordillera Central, and much more widely in the Sierra Madre.

The place to look for it is the margins of clear, fast-flowing, rocky mountain streams above 300 m.[8] Adjacent habitat can be tropical montane forest, pine forest, or just scrub with scattered trees. On Mt Data Rabor recorded it 'under heavy bush growths adjoining open grassy areas' and caught his only two specimens in rat traps in the same habitat as Long-tailed Ground-warbler *Bradypterus caudatus*, 'both birds being often observed under the dense growth of bushes close to the top of the plateau'.[5] It is not clear from Rabor's article whether these bushes were close to streams, but every other written account, including the recent study on Mt Pulog,[8] has reported birds in the immediate vicinity of running water. They move quickly from boulder to boulder, snapping up invertebrates at the water's edge or sallying after flying insects. Locals have reported nests with 2–4 eggs made below rocks by streams in June–August,[8,9] but the only one documented by ornithologists was 1.5 m up in a rocky bank and held young in February.[3b] Territories in optimal habitat appear to be spaced very roughly 500 m apart along watercourses.[8]

It is its tight relationship to a linear habitat that qualifies the Luzon Water Redstart for its Red Data Book status as a Vulnerable species. There may be many streams in northern Luzon, but pollution and siltation through mining and forest clearance are thought to be widespread.[4] Mt Data is a national park, but it is now apparently devoid of all forest;[4] Mt Pulog is also a national park, but in the early 1990s clearings and cultivations were being made inside the so-called protected area at an alarming rate, and the resulting erosion and biocide runoff was expected to have an impact on the aquatic systems of the area.[8,9] Indeed, given the still very limited number of sites from which the water redstart is known, it seems unreasonable to assume that such factors are *not* taking a substantial toll.

As with so many other species in the Philippines, we need much more information, much more long-term study, much clearer understanding of ecological needs and circumstances, before we can better judge how to classify and how to manage the Luzon Water Redstart. Birdwatchers can help by searching suitable habitat in mountains away from the known sites, revisiting some of the old ones in Benguet, seeking to obtain population estimates on stretches of stream, making note of the birds' feeding habits, and documenting the state of the local environment. Ultimately, however, the survival of the species will depend on the elimination of economic activities that are incompatible not only with the ecology of the water redstart but also with the health and safety of the human populations who depend on the water resources of the region.

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Conservation in Cambodia

After two decades of civil war and a genocidal regime which closed the country to outsiders for many years, the Kingdom of Cambodia is one of the least known countries in South-East Asia. As increasing political stability returns some semblance of peace, more is being learnt about the country's natural history and tentative progress is being made towards its conservation. Phillip Edwards reviews these recent developments.

Introduction

In February 1969 the first bombs fell from a US B-52 bomber over eastern Cambodia, and over the next four years huge quantities were dropped on the country, resulting in a civil war which continues to this day. The Khmer Rouge, a previously ineffective guerrilla movement, occupied Phnom Penh in April 1975 two weeks before Saigon fell to the communist Vietnamese. What followed was one of the most infamous social engineering experiments ever devised. Cities were forcibly evacuated, currency abolished, hospitals and schools closed, and anyone of intellectual standing was executed. Between two and three million people are believed to have died before the Vietnamese overthrew the regime in 1978. Despite recent defections, conflict continues between the Khmer Rouge and government forces.

In Cambodia recent history dominates everything including nature conservation. The flooded bomb craters around the airport are one of the first things you notice upon arrival, but the legacy of the war is all around, not least in the 40 million landmines estimated to have been laid. As such, physical access to the countryside is extremely limited and continuing hostilities place limits on conservation activities. Moreover, the mass execution of intellectuals has led to a shortage of educated people to implement government policies and time is thus needed to establish the base of experience that most other countries take for granted.

Biodiversity

Cambodia covers an area of 181,035 km^2 of continental South-East Asia bordered by Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. It has a short coastline of only 435 km. The Mekong River and the Tonlé Sap dominate the country's hydrology and there are two groups of mountains – those in the east comprising the western slope of the Annamite Chain while those in the south-west are the isolated highlands of the Elephant and Cardomom Mountains. From studies carried out before the war it appears that Cambodia may support about 212 species of mammal, 720 bird species, 240 reptiles species and over 2,300 species of vascular plants.[1,2] The country is regionally immensely important for its biodiversity because, unlike its neighbours, natural habitats remain relatively abundant, particularly lowland forests and wetlands which have been reduced or greatly modified elsewhere.

Forests

Cambodia contains the largest extent of natural forest in continental South-East Asia.[3] These support an abundance of wildlife featuring a wide range of mammals including cats, bears, primates, elephant, rhinoceroses, native cattle and deer. The fauna includes a number of species that have greatly declined or become extinct in neighbouring countries and, given the lack of comprehensive surveys, may even include rare species new to the country *e.g.* douc langur *Pygathrix nemaeus*, or even to science *e.g.* the 'khting sipu' (snake-eating deer), horns of which have been discovered in north-east Cambodia.

Nevertheless, this habitat is rapidly disappearing. In 1965 forest cover was estimated at 13.2 million ha (73% of the land area), but by 1991 this had declined to 11.2 million ha or 62% of the land area.[4] While early exploitation of Cambodia's forests was light, the rate of deforestation between the early 1960s and late 1980s is thought to have been 50,000 to 100,000 ha per annum.[5] The forests in the eastern part of the country suffered severe damage during the war and substantial deforestation took place during the Khmer Rouge Government. In 1985 timber export resumed, and substantial areas of forest

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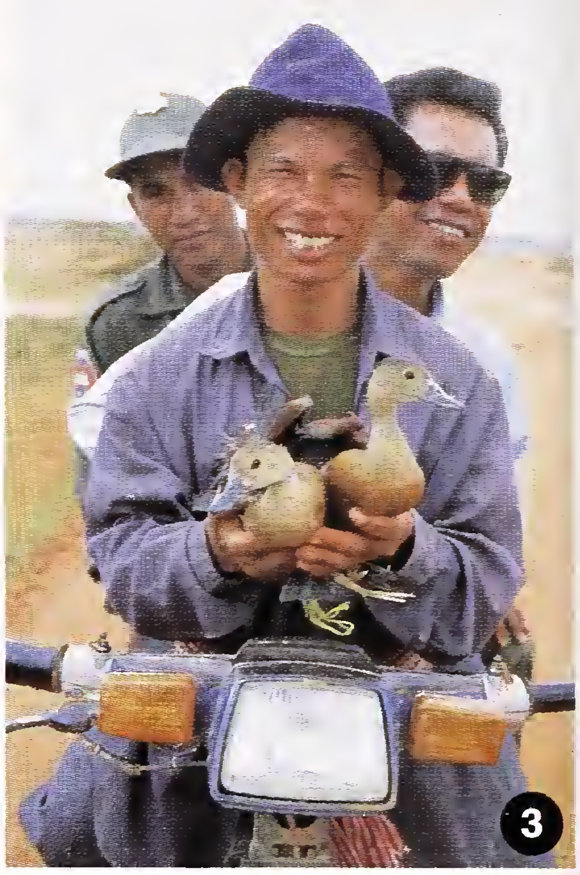

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1: Asian Openbill Storks *Anastomus oscitans* at Prek Toal (Photo: Sun Hean)
2: Wader prepared for the pot.
(Photo: Eleanor Briggs)
3: Fulvous Whistling-ducks *Dendrocygna bicolor*.
(Photo: Eleanor Briggs)
4: Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* at P. Kanteil.
(Photo: Eleanor Briggs)
5: Nordmann's Greenshanks *Tringa guttifer*.
(Photo: John Holmes)

4

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were cleared, particularly along roadsides to deter guerrilla attacks.

Currently, the main factors contributing to the loss of forest habitats are continuing internal hostilities, logging (both commercial concessions and illegal operations), shifting cultivation, and fuel collection. Data on the extent of these activities are sparse, although since the late 1980s logging has increased dramatically, particularly through concessions to foreign companies from (*e.g.*) Malaysia and Indonesia. It is estimated that roundwood production during 1989-91 showed a 27% increase on that for 1979-81.[6] Legal exports of wood products are believed to be matched, if not exceeded, by illegal exports, mainly to Thailand.[7]

Wetlands

Over 30% of Cambodia is classified as wetland, a proportion second in Asia only to Bangladesh,[3] and much is reported to be in a near-pristine condition. Over 20% (36,500 km^2) meets accepted criteria for classification as internationally important, comprising over 5% of all Asia's wetlands in this category.[8] Key amongst these are the Mekong river and its floodplain, Tonlé Sap and its floodplain, the Stung Sen, and the coastal estuaries of the Stung Kaôh Pao and Stung Kep. Cambodia is strongly tied to wetlands both culturally and economically. The central part of the country which supports the bulk of the population is essentially one large wetland and has been exploited for centuries to provide fish and rice – the staples of the local diet. This wetland is the Tonlé Sap, the largest floodplain lake in the world, with a unique hydrological system of reversed flow during the wet season. On the coast, Cambodia holds probably the most extensive and important mangrove forests in the Gulf of Thailand.

Cambodia's wetlands are currently threatened by a variety of human activities including drainage for agriculture; agricultural pollution from fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides; over-exploitation of fisheries and fuel wood resources; mining activities; and the side effects of deforestation such as increased siltation. Data are hard to source. WRI[6] suggests that 45% of Cambodia's pre-agricultural wetlands have been lost, as have 5% of the original area of mangrove. Although these figures may be inaccurate, they can be compared with WRI figures for neighbouring countries – 96% wetland loss and 87% mangrove loss for Thailand; 99% and 62% for Vietnam – and serve to reinforce the importance of the country's wetland resources. Claims are made regarding diminishing fish catches from the Tonlé Sap but no systematic statistics are available. Over-exploitation of certain species does seem to have occurred – the giant catfish, a main channel migrant endemic to the Mekong, is reportedly extinct in Cambodia. There are also unsubstantiated reports of widespread use of persistent organochlorine insecticides such as DDT. If the use of these chemicals is as widespread as locally reported, their accumulation in aquatic systems and bioconcentration in large organisms, particularly large waterbirds, many of which are globally rare or endangered, represents the most insidious threat currently facing Cambodia's wetlands.

Hunting and the wildlife trade

While habitat destruction is the single greatest threat to biodiversity in Cambodia, the trade in wildlife and its associated products also holds potentially grave implications for the continued survival of certain species. In addition to subsistence hunting of wild animals and foraging of wild plants, large-scale exploitation appears to cover the whole range of uses with wildlife and products appearing in wild game markets, medicinal markets, wildlife restaurants, and being used for decorative and religious purposes. Of particular concern is that, despite prohibitions, a flourishing illegal export trade exists with neighbouring countries.[9,10] Trade appears greatest in border areas, many of which are not under government control. Distribution systems seem to function effectively with little or no interference from border controls. Much of the trade going to Laos ends up in Thailand and that going to Vietnam is destined for China.

Mammals traded include tiger *Panthera tigris*, leopard *P. pardus*, clouded leopard *Neofelis nebulosa*, Asian elephant *Elephus maximus*, Asiatic black bear *Selenarctos thibetanus*, Malayan sun bear *Helarctos malayanus*, pangolin *Manis javanica*, banteng *Bos javanicus* and gaur *B. gaurus*, as well as reptiles (*e.g.* Siamese crocodile *Crocodylus siamensis*, reticulated python *Python reticulatus*, and various freshwater turtles), and birds (*e.g.* Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* and, at least historically, Giant Ibis *Pseudibis gigantea*). The population of tiger in Cambodia is currently estimated at 300 animals. However, around two or three tigers are being killed each month in

Cambodia for the international wildlife trade and conservationists estimate that as many as 100-150 tigers could have been poached in Cambodia since 1990.[11] A report by the Director of Forestry (D. Ashwell verbally) indicates that herds of around 200 Asian elephants have been shot out, while figures from recent aerial surveys by IUCN imply a decline in the national population of banteng from about 5,000 animals in the 1950s, to only 1,000-2,000 today (D. Ashwell verbally). Mundkur *et al.* report wild birds and reptiles on sale in the Oressey Market in Phnom Penh,[12] and in provincial town and village markets, counting 978 birds of over 28 species including the globally threatened Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*, Greater *Leptoptilos dubius* and Lesser Adjutants *L. javanicus* and Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*. Signs of trade were evident in October 1995 in Siem Reap where Spot-billed Pelican, Sarus Crane, Greater Adjutant, Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* and Green Peafowl *Pavo muticus* were all being kept as pets by the local Forestry Department, having been confiscated from local traders on their way to Phnom Penh. In January 1996 large numbers of commoner water birds such as Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*, Slaty-breasted Rail *Gallirallus striatus* and Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* were routinely on sale in the markets in Sihanoukville and at roadside stalls.

Protected areas

In 1925 Cambodia became the first country in South-East Asia to declare a national park – 10,800 ha of forest around the temple city of Angkor. In November 1993, His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk issued a decree entitled *The Creation and Designation of Protected Areas* which designated 23 areas as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, protected landscapes, or multiple-use areas. These total 3,327,200 ha or about 19% of the land surface, one of the highest proportions in South-East Asia. The critical shortage of resources means that of the 23 protected areas defined in the Royal Decree, only two have so far been inaugurated – Preah Suramarit-Kossomak (Kirirom) and Preah Sihanouk (Ream) National Parks between Phnom Penh and the coast, although the Ministry of Environment intends to inaugurate Phnom Bokor and Kep National Parks and Lomphat Wildlife Sanctuary shortly. Once inaugurated, some resources are directed towards putting guards on the ground, developing management plans, and establishing facilities, although lack of financial resources hampers all these operations.

International designations

Cambodia is also on the point of formally acceding to the Ramsar Convention. The necessary legislation has been passed by both Houses of Parliament and is awaiting the signature of the King. Three sites were identified, and are proposed, for designation on accession – Boeng Chhma, a freshwater site on the northern shore of the Tonlé Sap; Kaôh Kapik, a mangrove site on the coast close to the Thai border; and a stretch of the Mekong River in the north of the country.[13] Aerial and boat surveys of the Tonlé Sap in March and April 1994 encountered breeding colonies of the globally endangered Greater Adjutant, the globally vulnerable Lesser Adjutant and Spot-billed Pelican, and the near-threatened Painted Stork and Black-headed Ibis. Important feeding areas for these, plus the globally vulnerable Milky Stork *Mycteria cinereus*, and near-threatened Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*, Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* and Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*, along with numerous ibises, egrets, herons, bitterns and cormorants, were also located.[12] Further surveys in January 1996 re-discovered White-winged Duck *Cairina scutulata* in Cambodia at Boeng Chhma with three males and three females present – the first sighting in the country since the early 1960s. Also present were Oriental Darter, Spot-billed Pelican, the near-threatened Grey-headed Fishing Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*,[14] and a single Eastern White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, a species whose continued presence in Cambodia was thought doubtful.[12]

At Kaôh Kapik during the same survey, three species were recorded in Cambodia for the first time – Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*, Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, and Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna benghalensis*. The most significant of these is the first where 13 individuals were recorded making this what is believed to be the fifth highest site count anywhere in the world to date.[15] Broad-billed Sandpiper was also present in internationally important numbers with between 190 and 400 being counted. These records, plus high numbers of six other species, have meant that the site has also been added to the East Asia–Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network as a site that will receive full recognition once resources are available to manage it properly. Unfortunately at present, despite it lying within the Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary, the site is seriously threatened by illegal logging, mostly for the production of charcoal.

Conclusion

Cambodia possesses a wealth of wildlife in its extensive forests and wetlands. The relative political stability enjoyed by the country since 1992 has meant that these forests and wetlands are being opened up to greater exploitation of their resources with the inevitable detrimental consequences to that wildlife. However, simultaneously there is a great political will to make conservation work alongside the increasing economic growth. The protected area network is to be commended, and although still largely a paper exercise through a critical shortage of resources, the King's Decree is respected and the protected areas have been excluded from the various logging concessions recently let. Government resources are being directed to conservation issues both at policy level and on the ground. The Ministry of Environment is being assisted by various organisations in different ways. IUCN–The World Conservation Union has been instrumental in establishing the protected areas and is heavily involved in management planning and training; Wetlands International is co-operating with the government in developing a Wetland Action Plan for the kingdom; and the World Bank is in the final stages of completing a National Environment Action Plan which will assist future large-scale investment. The opportunities for ecotourism are being actively pursued at certain sites and the possibility of birders being able to visit more than just Angkor in this beautiful and friendly country may soon be a reality. But unlike elsewhere in South-East Asia, it is doubtful that the forests will be open for birding for many years, if ever – the ubiquity of the landmines will see to that.

Acknowledgements

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Aleutian Terns in South-East Asia

Although highly distinctive in their breeding plumage, it seems that the poorly known non-breeding plumages of Aleutian Tern have been overlooked in South-East Asia in the past. Here Peter Kennerley summarises the identification and recent occurrences of Aleutian Terns in South-East Asia.

Introduction

The Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica* breeds in the north Pacific Ocean from coastal Alaska, including some of the islands in the Aleutian chain, to the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk including Kamchatka and Sakhalin. Outside the breeding season the plumages, migration routes and wintering areas were until recently completely unknown. Prior to 1992, with the single exception of the remarkable record of a vagrant from the Farne Islands in north-east England in late May 1979,[1] the only reports away from the breeding areas were from Japan and the Philippines. In Japan, Brazil noted about 10 reports from Honshu and Hokkaido where breeding was also suspected in 1980.[2] The report from the Philippines referred to six birds collected in May 1984 near Pamilacan Island in the Mindanao Sea.[3]

The discovery of large numbers of Aleutian Terns in Hong Kong waters in August and September 1992 provided the first indication that the southbound migration appeared to follow the east Asian coast and into South-East Asia.[4] In September 1994 the first birds were identified in Singapore and shortly thereafter from the Malacca Straits and the seas around the island of Grand Karimun, which lies at the southern end of the Straits of Malacca in the Riau Archipelago of Indonesia.[5] Regular visits to Tanjung Balai, Grand Karimun (1°00'N, 103°E) between October 1995 and March 1996 established that Aleutian Terns were present inshore at Tanjung Balai. Further observations in 1996 revealed the presence of small numbers from late September onwards in the Straits of Singapore between Singapore, the Horsburgh Lighthouse (1°19'N, 104°24'E) and the island of Bintan in the Riau archipelago.

Identification of Aleutian Tern

In breeding plumage Aleutian Tern is a very distinctive bird which should not be confused with any other tern. The only potential pitfall is a poorly seen Common Tern *S. hirundo* of the eastern subspecies *longipennis* which shares a similar grey tone on the mantle and underparts, a white rump, uppertail coverts and tail and also has a black bill and dark brown or black legs. However, the white forehead patch and well-defined dark line on the underside of the secondaries of Aleutian Tern are diagnostic.

Separation of individuals in winter plumage is considerably more difficult and good views are required to establish identification in this plumage. Again, Common Tern is the most likely confusion species which occurs within the known non-breeding range of Aleutian Tern. Other potential confusion species, including Arctic Tern *S. paradisaea*, are unknown from Asia south of Japan.

Adult breeding

In breeding plumage adult Aleutian Terns are highly distinctive. The grey mantle is obviously darker than that of the nominate race of Common Tern but is very similar to that of *longipennis* and slightly paler than the other east Asian form, *tibetana*. As well as having a different forecrown pattern, all forms of Common Tern including *longipennis* lack the broad white edge to the inner wing and carpal bend of Aleutian Tern which is conspicuous both at rest and in flight.

In flight, the dark tips to the underside of the secondaries produce a dark trailing edge which contrasts with the plain inner primaries and otherwise white underwing, and this feature is diagnostic of Aleutian Tern. This can however be difficult to see on distant birds and good, close views are needed to clearly establish its presence. Common Terns of the race *longipennis* can at times appear to show a rather dusky and diffuse line along the underside of the primaries and secondaries but, when present, this lacks the sharply defined appearance shown by Aleutian Tern and also extends onto the inner primaries so the entire underside of the primaries and secondaries appears dull. However this feature is not consistent and the majority show entirely white secondaries.

Adult winter

In winter plumage separation from Common Tern is considerably more difficult, which is doubtless why Aleutian Tern has not been identified in the winter months until recently. The observation of several hundred birds in Hong Kong in August and September, during which many birds underwent and completed a body, tail and inner primary moult from breeding into winter plumage, has provided invaluable insight into the identification of Aleutian Tern in winter plumage.

The head pattern of winter Aleutian Tern differs significantly from that of Common Tern but in moulting birds this feature is obviously variable. In adult winter Aleutian Tern, the entire forehead and crown are white and the black is restricted to a narrow band which starts behind the eye, often leaving the black eye isolated in white feathering, and extends onto the nape which gives Aleutian Tern a bald-headed appearance. In comparison Common Tern shows a much more extensive black cap which covers the crown and upper nape and extends down the sides of the head, reaching and surrounding the eye and bulging down onto the ear-coverts behind the eye, leaving only the forehead and lores white. The lower nape is white in both species and contrasts with the black rear crown and grey mantle. In winter the mantle, coverts, scapulars and tertials of Aleutian Tern appear slightly darker than those of Common Tern. When moulting the greater coverts, the white bases to the underlying feathers appear as an irregular white patch along the length of the closed wing. We have only noticed this appearance on adult Aleutian Tern, but this is probably a feature of both species. The narrow white line along the edge of the forewing and round the carpal bend of breeding birds remains in winter but does not contrast with the breast as it does in breeding plumage, and is of little use in the separation from Common Tern. The underparts of both Aleutian and Common Terns are white in winter plumage.

In flight the rump and uppertail-coverts of Aleutian Tern are the same shade of grey as the mantle, while the freshly moulted central six or eight retrices are slightly paler than the mantle and the outer two pairs are white and only slightly longer than the grey central retrices. As in Common Tern, the inner four primaries of adult Aleutian Tern are moulted in late August and early September, while the outer primaries are retained until the winter when they are replaced. The new inner primaries are grey, slightly paler than the mantle, while the retained outer primaries appear darker than the remainder of the upperwing and show conspicuous white shafts. In winter the underwing retains the diagnostic dark line along the tips of the secondaries similar to that of adult breeding birds.

Juvenile

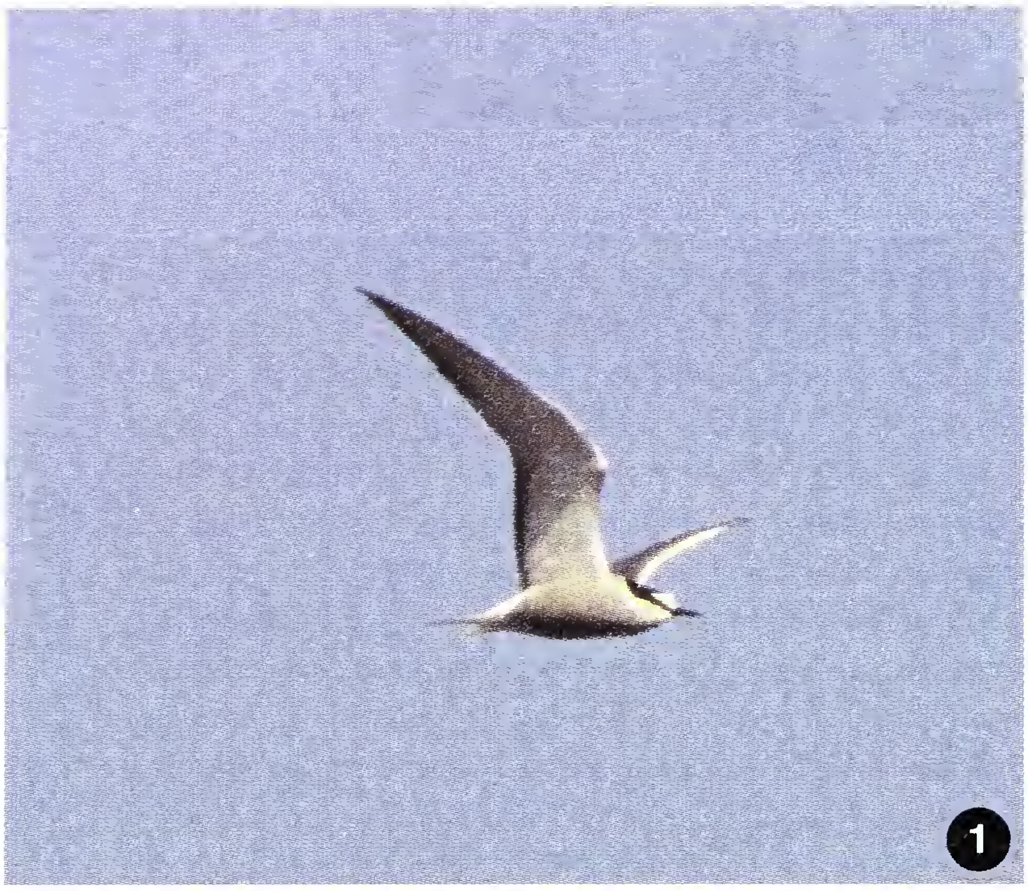
Since birds in juvenile plumage have not been seen anywhere in South-East Asia, discussion of this plumage is based upon juveniles from the breeding grounds. Carey and Leader describe juvenile Aleutian Tern as showing a dark brown crown and upper nape, slightly paler forehead and dark lores with a buff wash to the face and sides of the chest which extends to form a pale buff collar.[6]

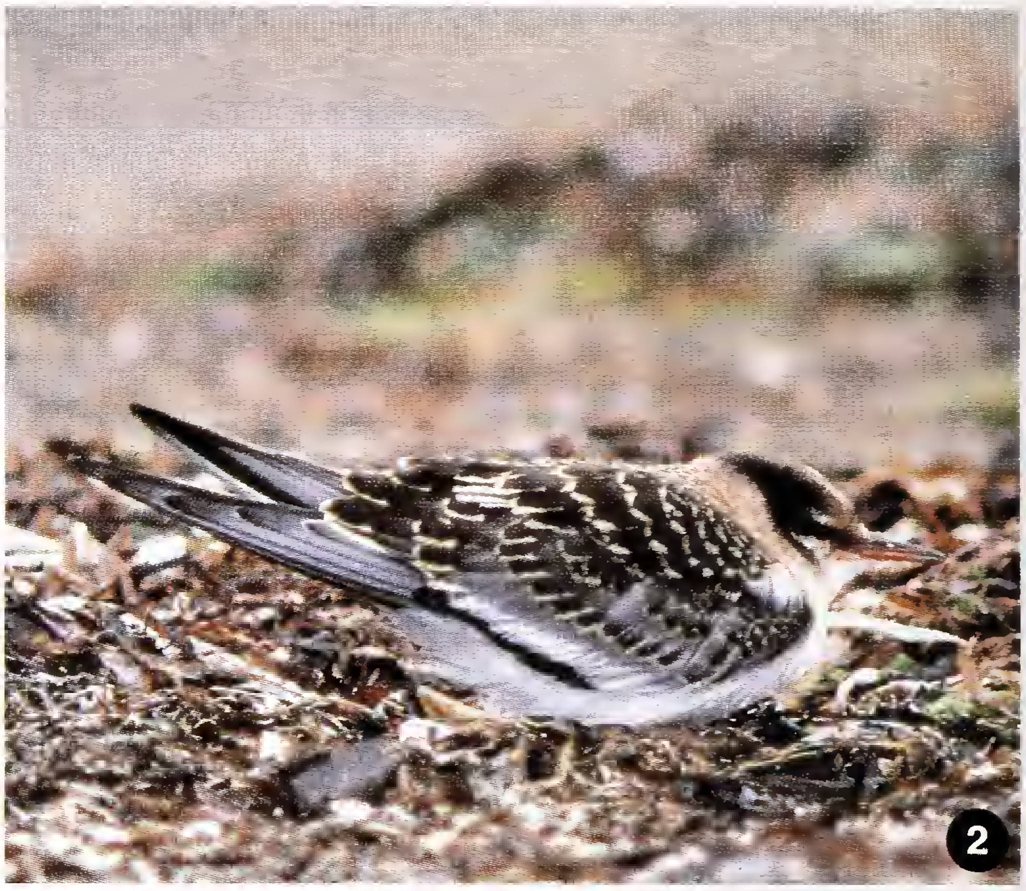
The mantle and scapulars are dark brown with deep buff fringes, which is very different to the upperparts of Common Tern and contrasts with the pale grey uppertail-coverts and rump.

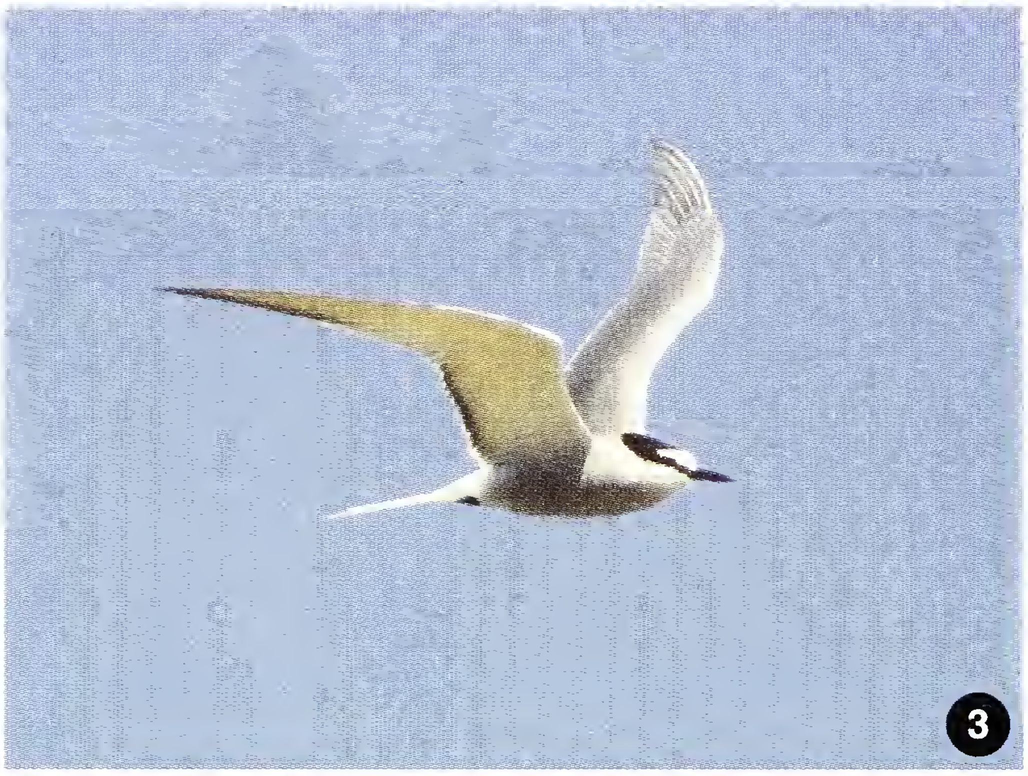
The tertials, inner, lesser and median wing-coverts are dark brown with deep buff fringes that contrast with rather grey, white or buff-tipped greater-coverts. The outer wing and flight feathers are greyish-white with pale tips to the secondaries and inner primaries. At rest, the contrast between the brown of the tertials, mantle and scapulars and the grey of the outer wing-coverts and primaries is distinctive. The exposed primaries are dark metallic grey, narrowly edged off-white. The distinctive dark bar on the underside of the secondaries present on adults is also present although it is more diffuse.

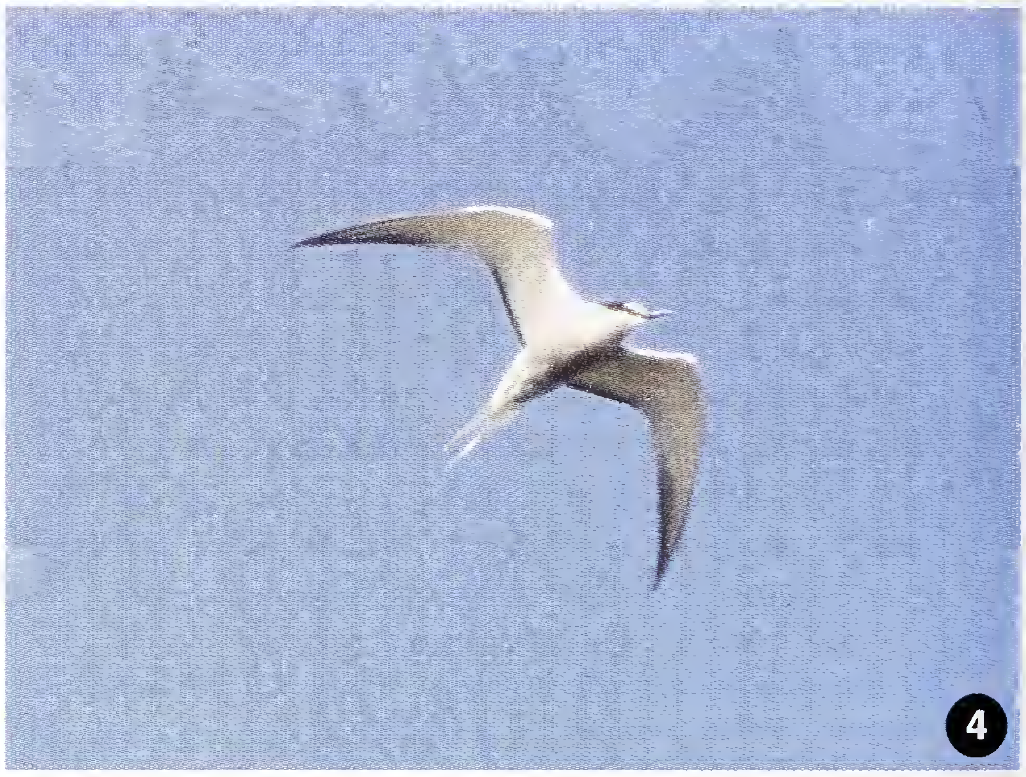
First winter

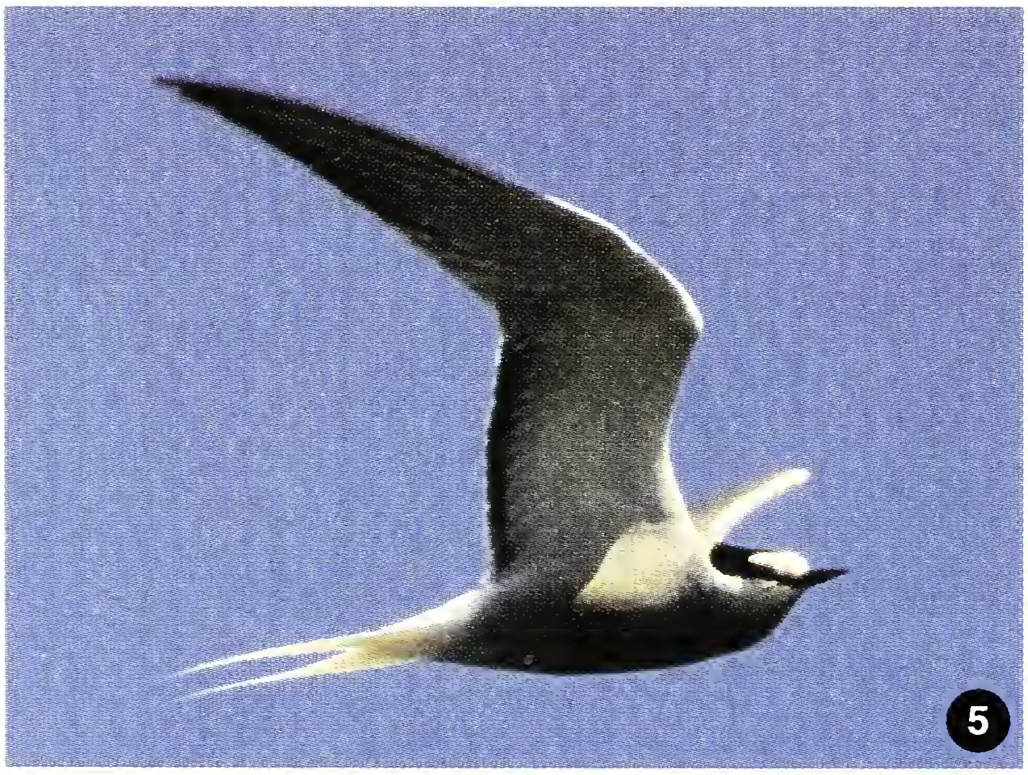
Juvenile Aleutian Tern has a complete body moult from juvenile to first winter. The actual time of this moult has not been established, however by February Aleutian Terns in first winter plumage are present in waters offshore from Karimun, having completed the moult into this plumage. As in Common Tern the inner primaries are also replaced during this moult and contrast with the darker worn outer primaries. They then show a











1,4,5: Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica*.
Adult, breeding plumage. Nome, Alaska, USA. June 1997.
(Photo: Ron Saldino)

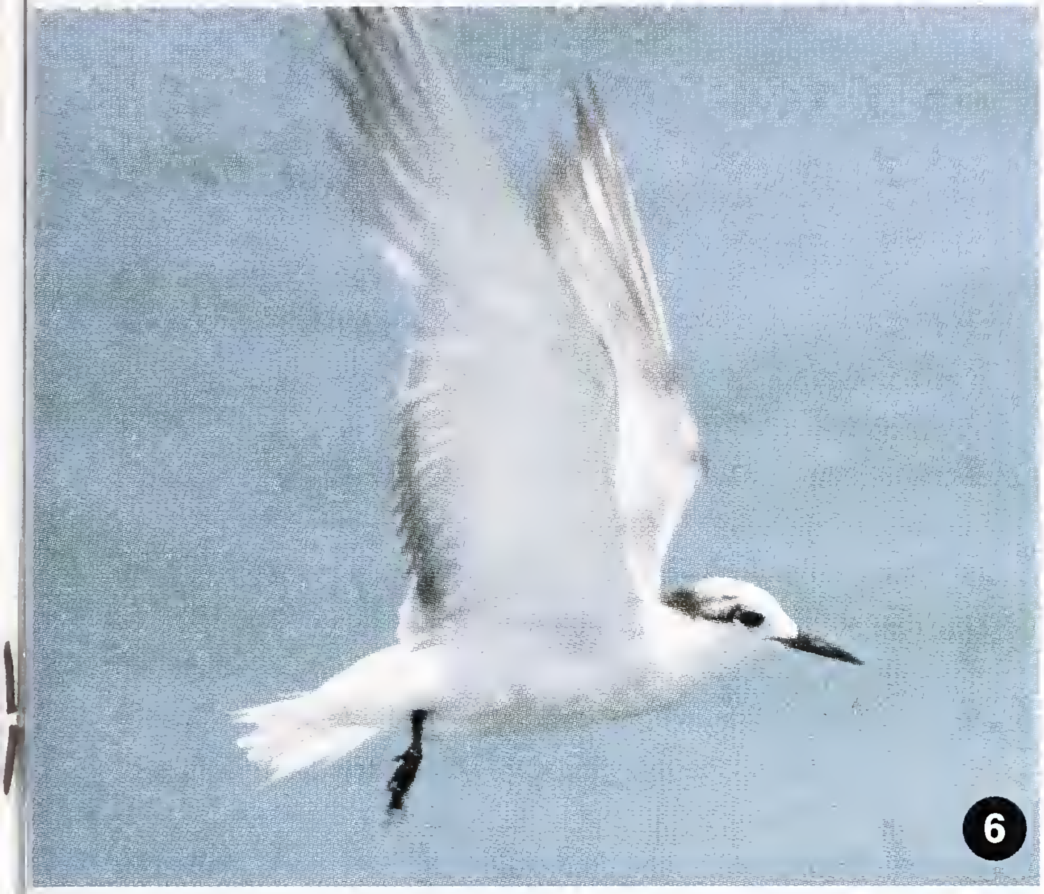
2: Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica*.
Juvenile. Hokkaido, Japan. 25th August 1980. Birds in this very distinctive plumage have not yet been seen in Hong Kong or elsewhere in South-East Asia.
(Photo: Shigenori Okubo)

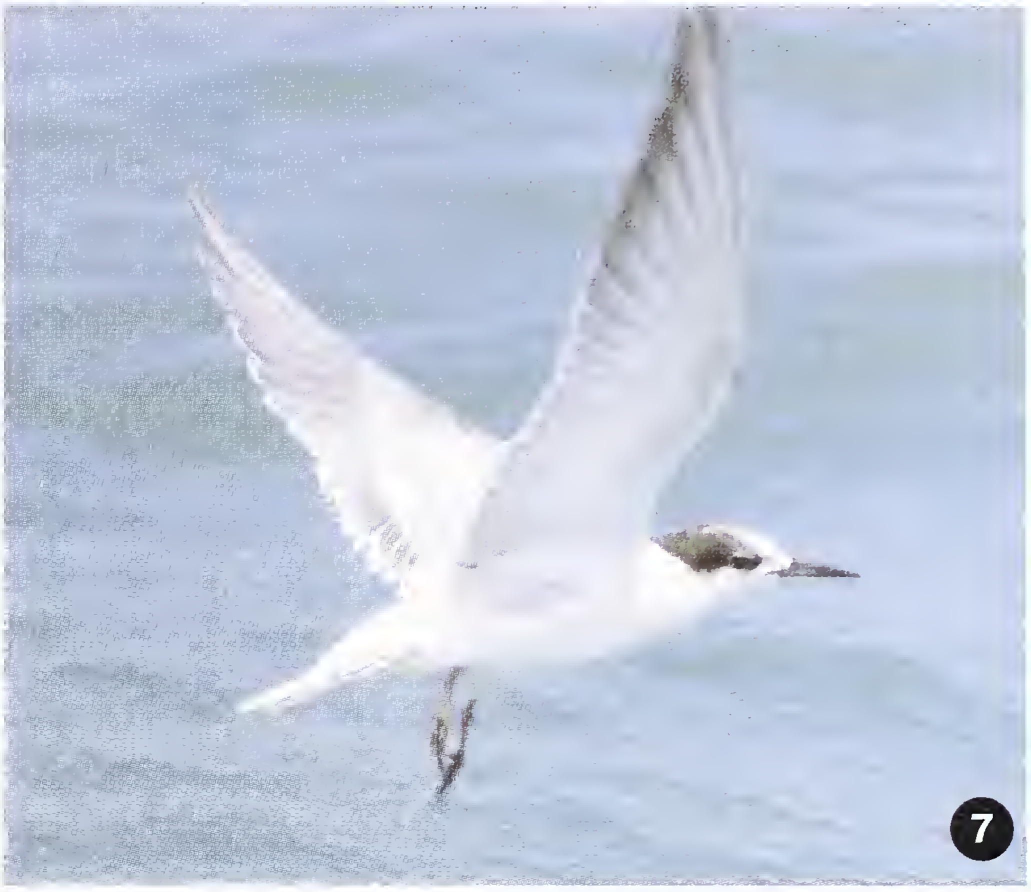
3: Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica*.
Adult, breeding plumage. Nome, Alaska, USA. June 1986. Note the contrast between the old worn outer primaries and the fresh inner primaries. Although old, the outer primaries are not excessively worn. (Photo: Peter R. Kennerley)

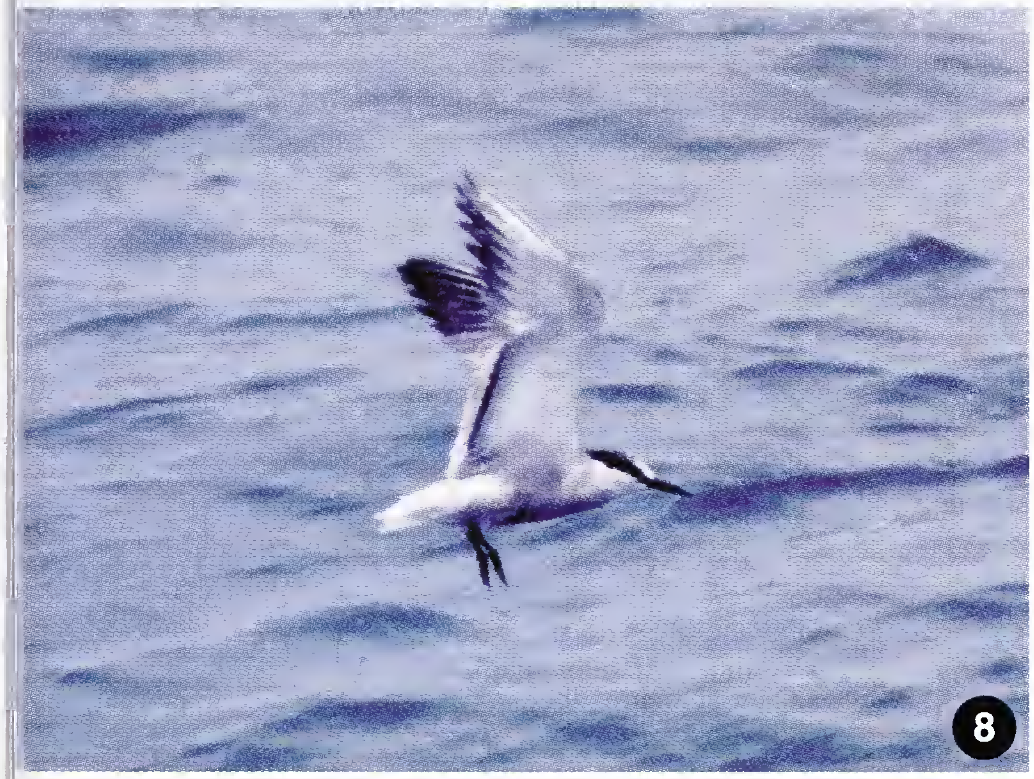
6: Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica*.
Adult. Hong Kong 18th September 1992. By mid-September the moult into winter plumage is usually well advanced. This individual shows the white crown and dark nape band which separates Aleutian from Common Tern *S. hirundo* in winter plumage. Note the extent of moult of the inner primaries and the retrices. (Photo: Peter R. Kennerley)

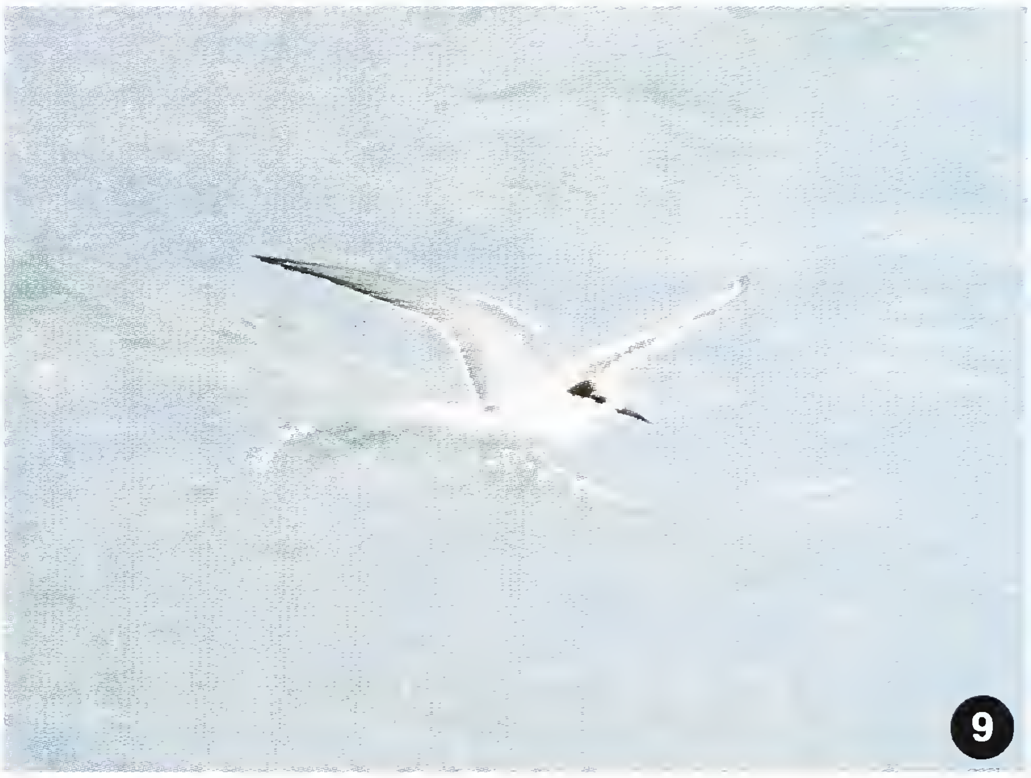
7: Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*.
Juvenile, Hong Kong 18th September 1992. Compared with juvenile Aleutian Tern *S. aleutica*, juvenile Common Tern is paler and lacks the highly contrasting upperpart pattern and shows a more extensive dark crown and nape which forms a hood on the rear of the head. (Photo: Peter R. Kennerley)

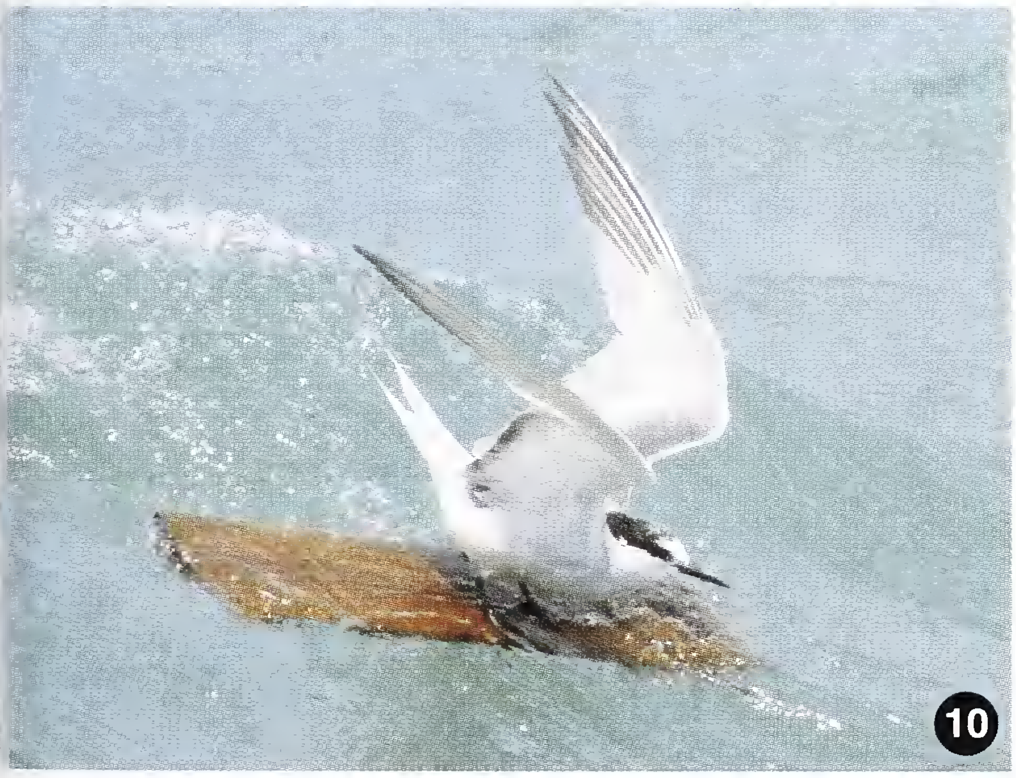
8: Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica*.
Adult, Hong Kong. Note the distinctive underwing pattern.
(Photo: Robert Fung)

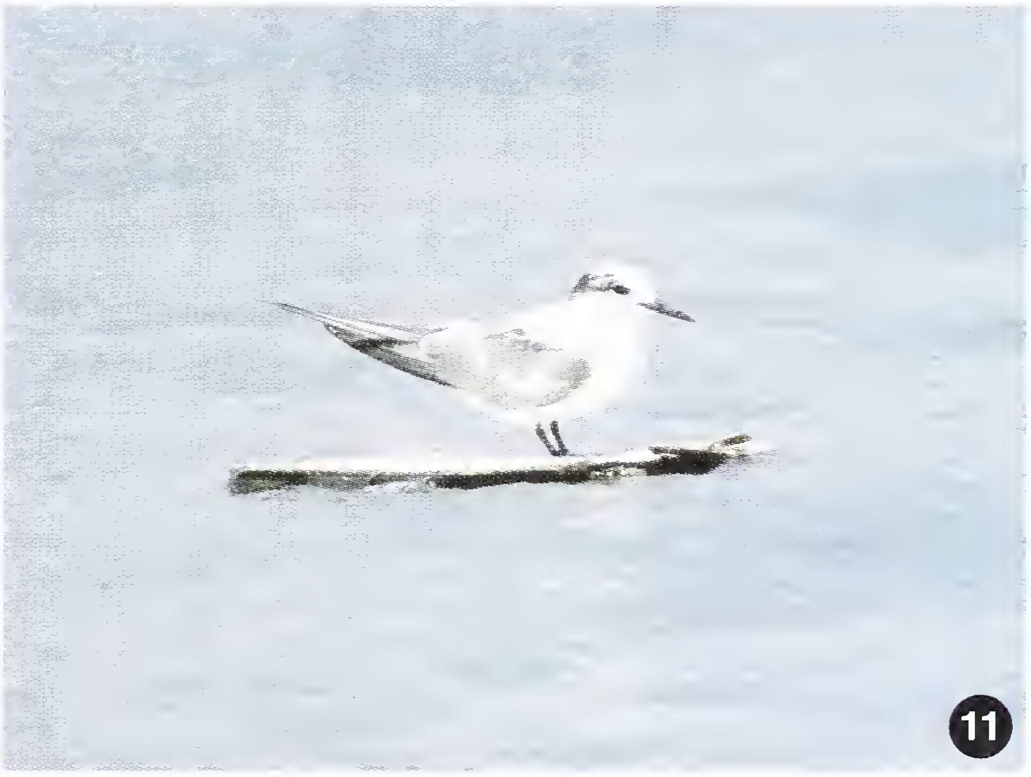












: Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*.
uvenile, Hong Kong 18th September 1992. Note the nderwing of this individual shows a similar pattern to that of leutian Tern but the dark line to the tips of the underside of he secondaries is rather smudged and diffuse. Confusion with dult winter Aleutian Tern could occur if similar birds are oorly seen. (Photo: Peter R. Kennerley)

0: Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica*.
dult. Hong Kong 18th September 1992. By mid-September the moult into winter plumage is well advanced. This individual largely retains breeding plumage but moult of the crown, greater-coverts and inner primaries has commenced. (Photo: Peter R. Kennerley)

11: Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica*.
Adult. Hong Kong 18th September 1992. This winter plumage individual is typical of birds seen in the winter months in the Straits of Singapore and adjacent seas. (Photo: Peter R. Kennerley)

great resemblance to winter plumage adults with uniform mid-grey upperparts, rump and tail. The head is largely white apart from a gingery wash restricted to the nape and similar in colour to that of juveniles. This plumage, including the ginger wash, can be retained until late August by which time it is faded and bleached and is occasionally seen on first-summer birds in Hong Kong. A moult of the outer primaries and the tail apparently occurs in late spring. Lee noted that of the five immature specimens collected from the Philippines in May,[3] three had replaced all but the outermost three primaries and one had replaced all but the outer two. The remaining specimen had all new flight feathers. All five had replaced tail feathers.

Second winter

Aleutian Terns in their second winter are virtually identical to adults in winter plumage. The only apparent differences being the presence of a darker lesser-covert bar and dark tips to the upper surface of the secondaries. This plumage is attained in September during a general body moult from first winter plumage although the worn outer primaries are retained until the arrival in the wintering areas. Since these features are shared with winter plumage Common Tern there is a greater possibility of confusion in this plumage. However the head pattern and dark line on the underside of the secondaries should prevent confusion.

Bare parts

The bill, legs and feet of Aleutian Tern are black throughout the year, and bill colour and structure and leg length are very similar to those of Common Tern of the form *longipennis* and cannot be safely used to separate them in the field. The legs and feet of Common Tern of the form *longipennis* may be either black, dark brown or occasionally dark red, and only in the case of those individuals with distinctly brown or reddish legs can the identification eliminate Aleutian Tern.

Structure

In flight Aleutian Terns appear longer-tailed and longer-winged than Common Terns and show a broader wing-base. The flight is very relaxed with slow, shallow beats with the emphasis on the downstroke. When seen alongside Common Terns this distinctive flight is obviously different and, with practice, this can be used to separate the two species at considerable distance.

At rest, Aleutian Terns frequently adopt a very distinctive posture, with the body and tail being angled by up to approximately 30 degrees to the horizontal so the tail and wingtips are held at or above head height. This posture enables Aleutian Terns to be separated from Common Terns when perched on flotsam, even at long range when plumage features are not apparent.

Call

Aleutian Terns are remarkably vocal both on the breeding grounds and elsewhere. The call is a highly distinctive wader-like *chit* rather similar to the call of Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*. This call, which has been heard from birds during spring and autumn migration as well in the winter quarters, is readily separable from the typical call of Common Tern.

Status in South-East Asia

Hong Kong

Aleutian Terns are regular migrants through Hong Kong and offshore waters during autumn and spring. In autumn they occur between mid-August and early October, while in spring they pass through rapidly from mid-April until early May, although there is one record in early June.

In autumn Aleutian Terns frequently outnumber Common Terns in Hong Kong, for example the highest single-day count of 190 was recorded on 19th August 1992, the date of their original discovery. The earliest autumn record is 10th August 1995 and the latest 15th October 1995. Since 1992 numbers recorded have been smaller but the rapid decline in numbers probably reflects reduced observer activity in offshore waters than a real decline in numbers. This was certainly the case in 1996. Arrival of substantial numbers in Hong Kong, followed by a gradual decline throughout September as birds continue south, is clearly apparent. August arrivals are invariably adults in breeding plumage but by mid-September most have started, and a minority have completed, a moult into winter plumage. As yet no birds in juvenile plumage have been seen in Hong Kong or elsewhere in South-East Asia, although birds in first- and second-summer plumages birds have been recorded.

Aleutian Terns were recorded annually in spring between 1993 and 1996 but the numbers are much smaller than in autumn, with the maximum day count not exceeding 23 birds.

However, this may be due to fewer visits by observers into offshore waters where they are most likely to occur. Visits in late April have often located them although they are invariably outnumbered by Common Terns and more systematic searches in future may establish them to be occurring more frequently and in larger numbers than the available data suggest. Northbound passage in the spring appears rapid and the occurrence in spring may be influenced by onshore winds, causing displacement of northbound migrants. The earliest spring record relates to a bird in breeding plumage near Po Toi on 14th April 1997 and the latest was in the West Lamma Channel on 2nd May 1993, apart from a single bird in breeding plumage near Waglan Island on 7th June 1993. This record is over a month later than the established passage period, and adult Aleutian Terns should be on the breeding grounds by this date.

Where to see Aleutian Terns in Hong Kong

Except during tropical storms or typhoons, Aleutians Terns do not usually come close enough to the shore in Hong Kong to be positively identified. It is therefore necessary to take a boat to view them. With a vessel at your disposal a visit to the Western Anchorage, or southern and eastern waters will almost certainly encounter large numbers of terns including Aleutian and Common. However, this is a very expensive option, typically in the range of HK$3,000 for eight hours, and is only viable if costs can be shared. A check with the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (P. O. Box 12460, GPO, Hong Kong) to establish whether any trips are planned may be worthwhile. If not, the only alternative option is the passenger ferries which ply between Hong Kong island and the outlying islands of Lantau, Lamma and Cheung Chau. These ferries are inexpensive, slow-moving and are the easiest means of getting to grips with Aleutian Tern. If birds are close to the ferry, good views can be obtained but, unlike with a chartered vessel, you cannot pursue distant birds or stop to look at those loafing on nearby flotsam.

A further option is the ferry which runs between Ma Liu Shui near the Chinese University and Ping Chau in Mirs Bay. This ferry operates only on weekends and is less reliable for Aleutian Terns than the harbour ferries, but they have been seen on several occasions as it passes through Mirs Bay.

Tropical storms in August and September are likely to move Aleutian Terns close inshore and the best place to view them from is Cape D'Aguilar at the south-east corner of Hong Kong Island. Access may be difficult as public transport and taxis are unlikely to be available during tropical storms but if access to Cape D'Aguilar is possible Aleutian Terns and many other seabirds may be seen at close quarters if conditions are suitable.

Indonesia

The first record of Aleutian Tern from Indonesia was on 18th September 1994 when an adult was seen from the ferry which crosses the Straits of Malacca between Singapore and Tanjung Balai.[5] There were no further reports until the following spring when two were again seen from the Singapore-Tanjung Balai ferry on 19th April 1995 and a further three at Tanjung Balai itself on the same day; all of these were assumed at the time to be migrants.

Regular observations in the Straits of Malacca between Singapore and Indonesia have shown that Aleutian Terns are present in small numbers, to date recorded between 18th September and 25th April.

It is now established that Aleutian Terns regularly occur in the channel between Tanjung Balai and adjacent Pulau Parit, occasionally coming close inshore. The maximum number positively identified at Tanjung Balai is 15 on 19th January 1996 but as there were well over 100 terns present on this date, many too far offshore to be identified with certainty, the actual numbers are likely to be higher.

Visiting Tanjung Balai

Tanjung Balai is easily reached by ferry from the World Trade Centre, Singapore, the journey time is approximately 80 minutes and a return ticket will cost approximately S$46. Return ferries to Karimun also run from Kukup in Johor, Malaysia. Aleutian Terns may be seen from the ferry as it approaches Tanjung Balai or flying offshore from the town itself, occasionally close inshore. Other species to look out for on this crossing are Great-billed Heron *Ardea sumatrana* on the exposed reefs at low tide and Swinhoe's Petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* which is a common passage migrant through offshore waters in May and September/October. The restaurant in the hotel adjacent to the immigration facilities provides an excellent viewing platform and birds occasionally pass within 30 metres but are more typically several hundred metres offshore. Don't forget your passport and check the visa requirements which apply to your passport!

Singapore

The first record of Aleutian Tern in Singapore was an adult moulting into winter plumage on 15th September 1994 at Marina South adjacent to the mouth of the Singapore River.[5] Small numbers subsequently remained around the eastern coast of Singapore between Labrador Point and Seletar until 6th October. There have not been any subsequent records from the main island since 1994. However, this was a year of exceptionally poor visibility due to the smog which was emanating from forest burning in Sumatra. This poor visibility may have been a factor which forced birds to fish to within 50 metres of the shoreline.

Although there were no reports in 1995 a concerted effort was made in autumn 1996 to establish the status in Singapore waters including the Straits of Singapore east to the Horsburgh Lighthouse. At least 15 adult Aleutian Terns in winter plumage were seen during a transect from Jurong, Singapore, to the Horsburgh Light on 13th October 1996, and there were many distant and unidentified birds which may also have been this species. However, only a single adult was identified within the Singapore port area and offshore waters are clearly preferred, as in Hong Kong.

It is highly probable that Aleutian Tern occurs regularly in Singaporean waters throughout the winter months. However, the logistical arrangements to establish this are so complex, and the costs so prohibitive, that observations remain irregular.

Discussion

A lack of observers and, until very recently, a limited understanding of relevant identification criteria has clearly masked our knowledge of Aleutian Tern distribution in South-East Asia. It appears that a substantial proportion of the population moves south along the coast of south-east China in the autumn, reaching Hong Kong by mid-August. Smaller numbers appear in the Straits of Singapore by mid-September and observations of migrating and wintering birds in the Straits of Singapore and near Grand Karimun demonstrate this to be a regular wintering area. As yet Aleutian Tern has not been recorded between Hong Kong and Singapore but it must surely occur along the east coast of Vietnam and Peninsular Malaysia. It is possible they winter throughout the Sunda region and the Philippines in small groups. The entire population, which is estimated to be no more than 23,000 individuals,[7] could easily be overlooked in such a vast area where Common Terns also winter widely and in large numbers.

If the main wintering area lies within the Greater Sunda region it would seem possible that specimens collected from within the region may have been mistakenly identified as Common Tern. To investigate this possibility, PRK visited the Zoological Reference Collection housed in the University of Singapore in May 1997. Examination of this collection, which contains one of the largest and most complete series of specimens of birds taken in South-East Asia, has confirmed that all the Common Terns deposited there are correctly identified.

That there are no Aleutian Terns in this collection is rather surprising and may indicate that wintering areas of the spsecies are very localised. Searches for wintering birds around islands adjacent to Karimun have been unproductive, perhaps supporting this view. The area near Tanjung Balai remains the only known regular wintering site. Interestingly, the water depth increases to 20 metres close to Karimun and this deeper water may be the attraction to Aleutian Terns.

Do some Aleutian Terns continue through the Straits of Malacca into the Indian Ocean? There is currently no evidence to suggest this but their presence in the Straits of Malacca would seem inexplicable unless some birds regularly winter to the west of the Malay Peninsula and possibly in the Indian Ocean. Swinhoe's Petrel, for example, follows such a route to wintering grounds in the Indian Ocean.

Now that observers know where to look and what to look for, it seems likely that there will be more observations of Aleutian Terns from the countries of South-East Asia. A clearer understanding is gradually emerging but it is likely to be many years before the migration routes and wintering grounds of the Aleutian Tern are fully understood.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Ron Saldino and Robert Fong for their photographs and also Shigenori Okubo for allowing us to publish his excellent photograph of a juvenile Aleutian Tern. The Hong Kong Birdwatching Society kindly allowed us access to their database and for us freely to publish the Aleutian Tern data. Mrs Chan at the Zoological Reference Collection, Singapore, allowed us to examine the specimens housed in her care.

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Birdwatching areas

Harike Bird Sanctuary, Punjab State, India

The north-west is the region of India most visited by birders, yet relatively few have ventured as far as Harike, in spite of it being one of the finest birdwatching areas in the country. We are grateful to Prion Press for permission to reproduce the following account by Krys Kazmierczak, Per Undeland, Des Allen and Raj Singh which is adapted from *A birdwatcher's guide to India* by Krys Kazmierczak and Raj Singh to be published this summer.

A very rich wetland that is somewhat off the birder's usual beaten track is the Harike Bird Sanctuary, a large shallow man-made lake on the River Sutlej just below its confluence with the River Beas. Because of its huge concentrations of wintering waterfowl it has been included in the list of Indian Ramsar sites. The keen birder will, however, more likely be attracted by the presence of a number of species not normally found elsewhere in India.

The globally threatened Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albicollis* is regularly seen and large flocks of the equally threatened Yellow-eyed Pigeon *Columba eversmanni* winter here. The very localised Sind Sparrow *Passer pyrrhonotus* and Sykes's Nightjar *Caprimulgus mahrattensis* are most reliably seen at Harike and the very rare Bristled Grassbird *Chaetornis striatus* has recently been found to breed. The subcontinental endemic Rufous-vented Prinia *Prinia burnesii* is a vulnerable species for which this is one of the most important sites, while White-crowned Penduline Tit *Remiz coronatus*, Cetti's Bush Warbler *Cettia cetti* and Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* are sought-after winter visitors.

The variety of habitats supports a highly diverse avifauna with more than 140 species breeding. Its location in the intensively cultivated plains of north-western India also makes Harike an extremely important staging post for birds migrating to and from their breeding grounds in the Western Himalayas, Central Asia and Siberia, with passage effectively lasting for ten months of the year. The number of species recorded from Harike of some of the highly migratory groups clearly demonstrates this to be the case: 23 ducks and geese, 31 raptors, 49 waders, 19 Laridae, 10 flycatchers, 9 leaf warblers, 10 pipits and 9 buntings. Further observation is bound to add to the 360 plus species already recorded from Harike. Visitors to India are encouraged to add this to the usual north-west Indian birding itinerary as this will help demonstrate the sanctuary's importance for wildlife to the local populace and authorities.

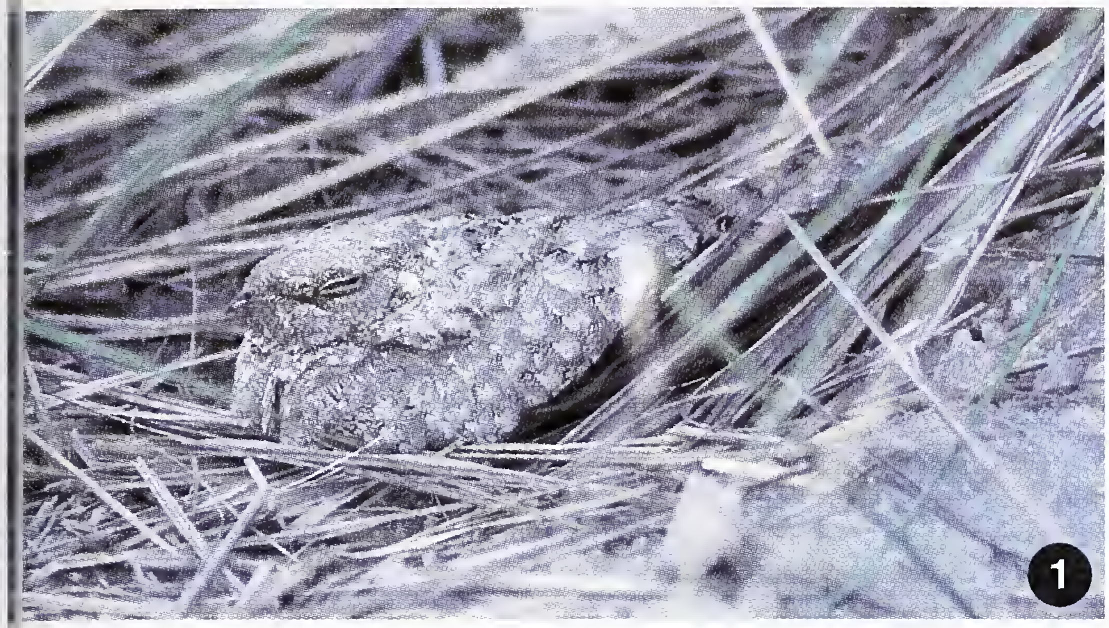
Location

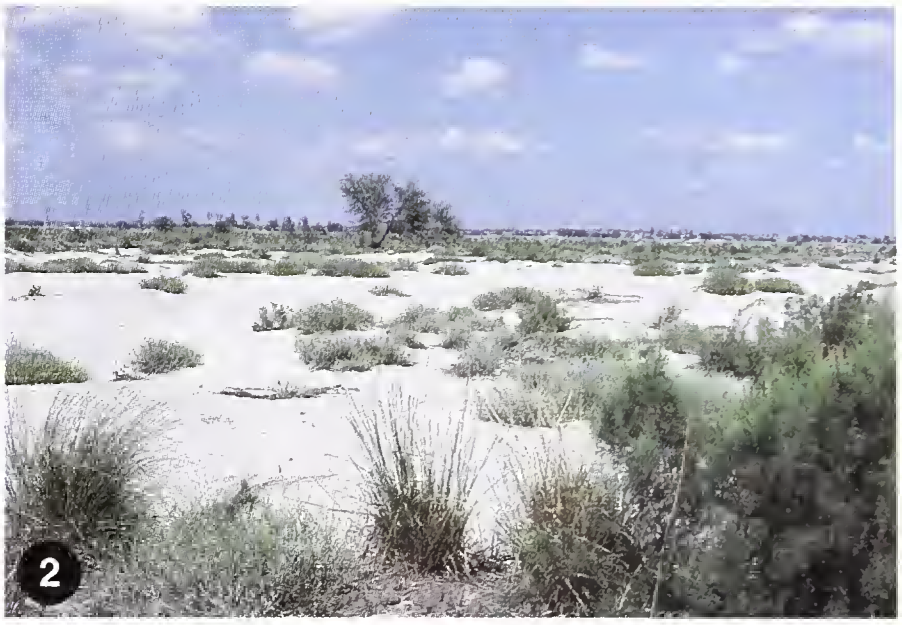
Harike is in the Punjab of north-west India, not far from the border with Pakistan, and can be visited directly from Delhi, on the way to Kashmir, or as part of an itinerary involving the Thar Desert to the south. The nearest big towns are Amritsar, the religious capital of the Sikhs, 60 km to the north, and the textile centre of Ludhiana 100 km to the east. The airport at Amritsar has Indian Airlines flights to Delhi and Srinagar in Kashmir.

Probably the best way to get to Harike is by rail and road. The fastest train, the Shatabdi Express, currently leaves New Delhi Station at 16.30 and takes about four hours to reach Ludhiana and another two to Amritsar. From Ludhiana you can take a bus to the town of Moga (1-2 hrs) 40 km to the south-east of Harike on the road to Firozpur. From Moga the regular Amritsar-bound buses pass through Harike. The journey takes 1 hr and the first bus of the morning leaves at 05.30. Get off the bus at the Nanaksar-Ishar Dham Gurdwara (Sikh Temple) at the southern end of the dam on the Sutlej River. Taxis are easily available in Moga, Ludhiana and Amritsar but hard to find in Harike. Some people might find it more convenient to take one of the overnight trains from Delhi to Amritsar and a southbound bus from there. Check locally, but the last buses usually leave Harike again at about 17.00.

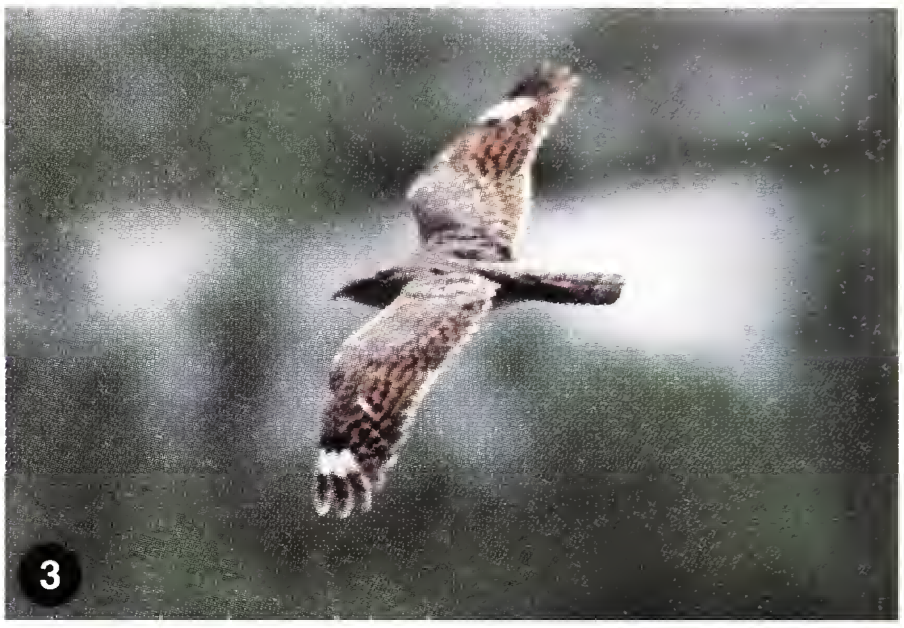
Accommodation

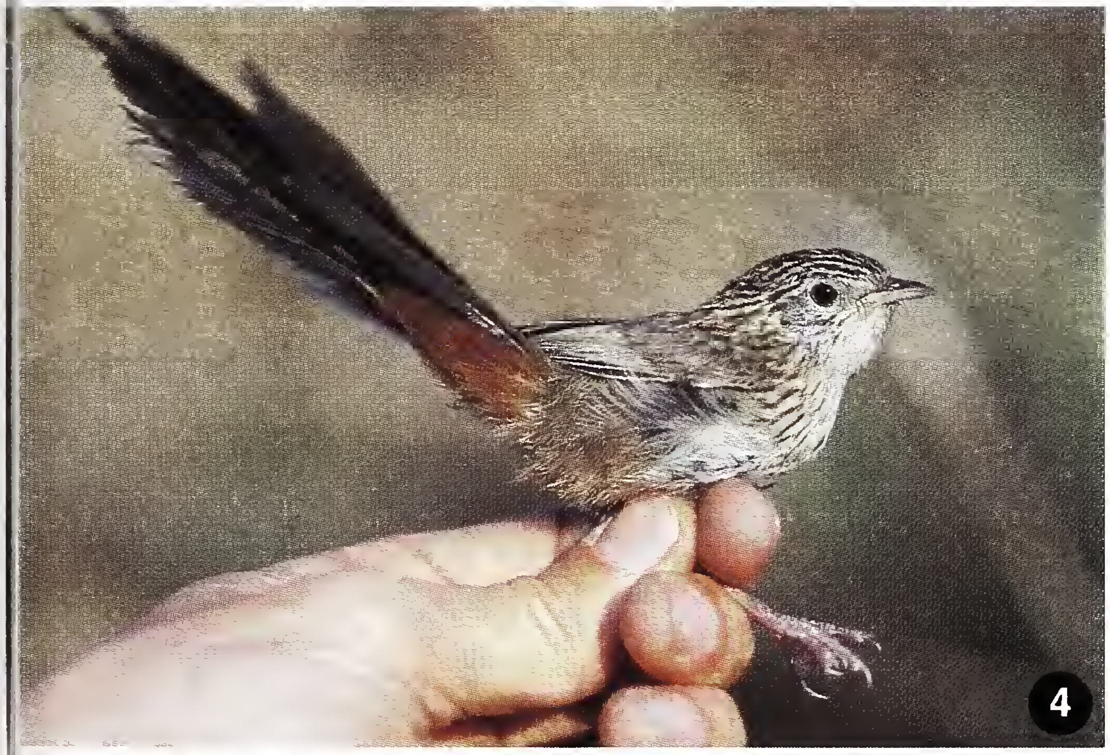
The nearest good accommodation is in hotels at Moga and Amritsar. At Moga there are several

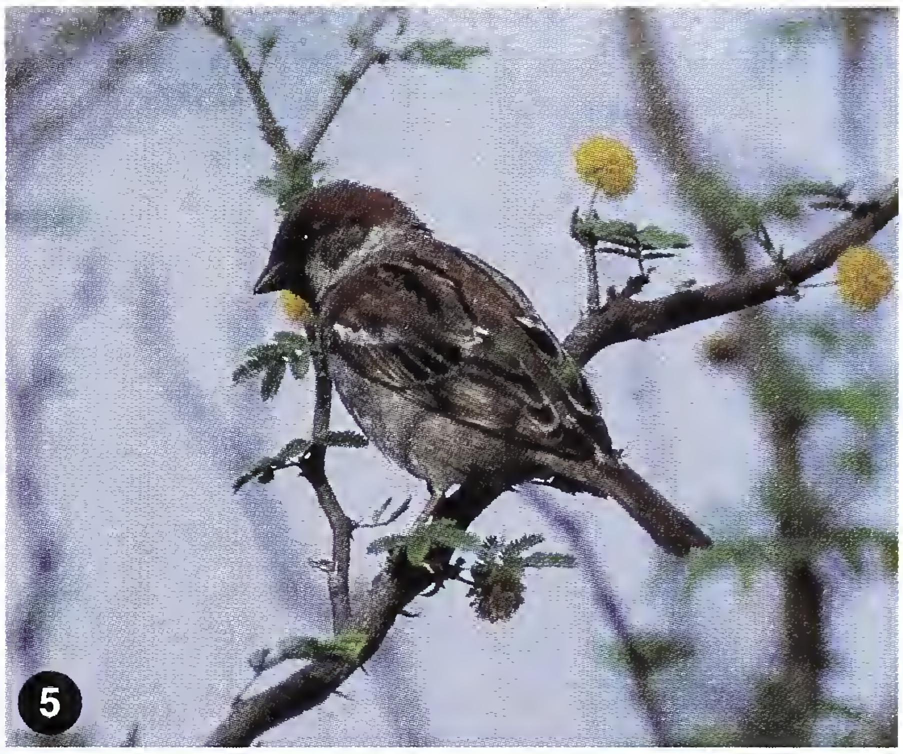


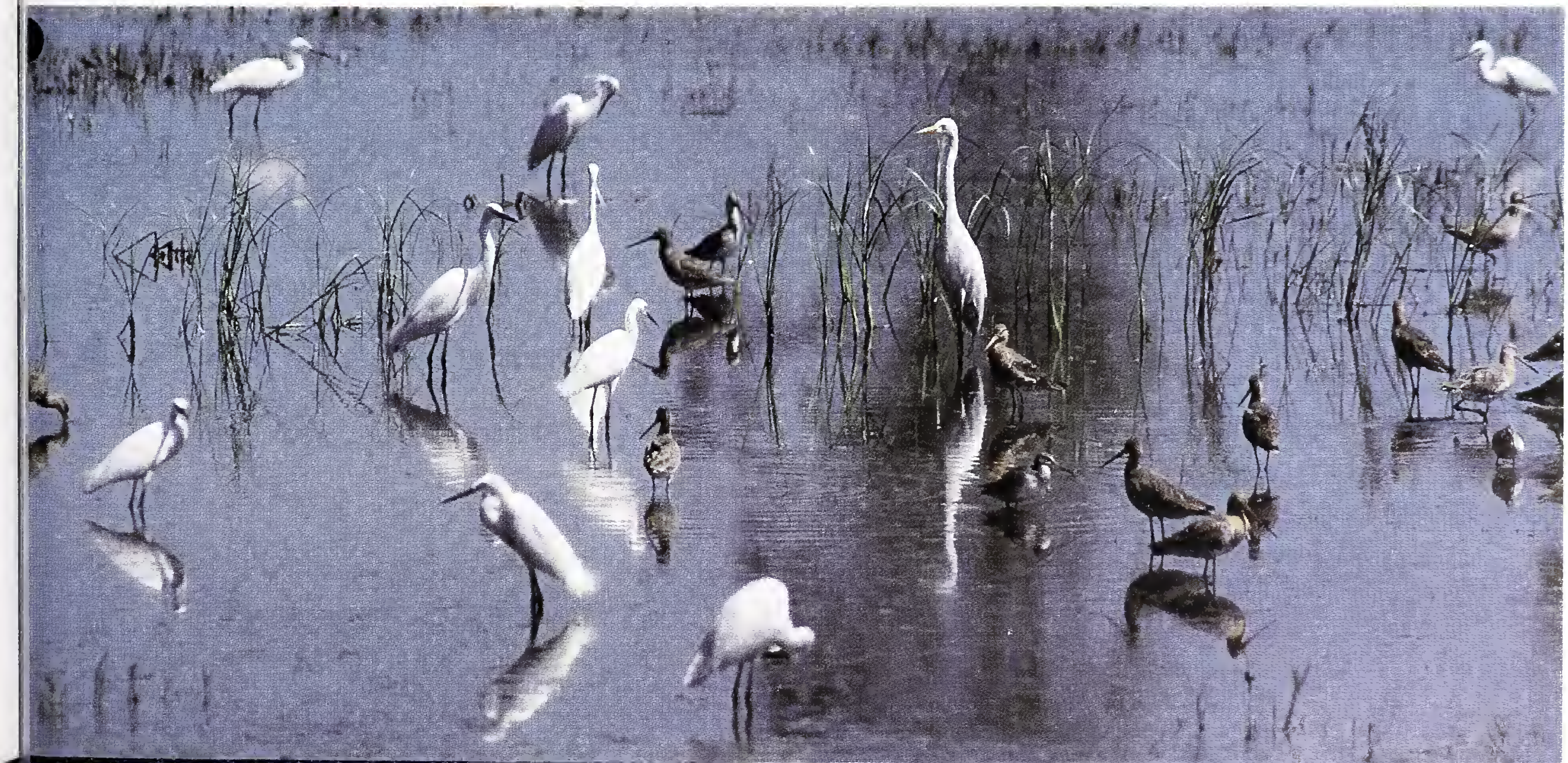


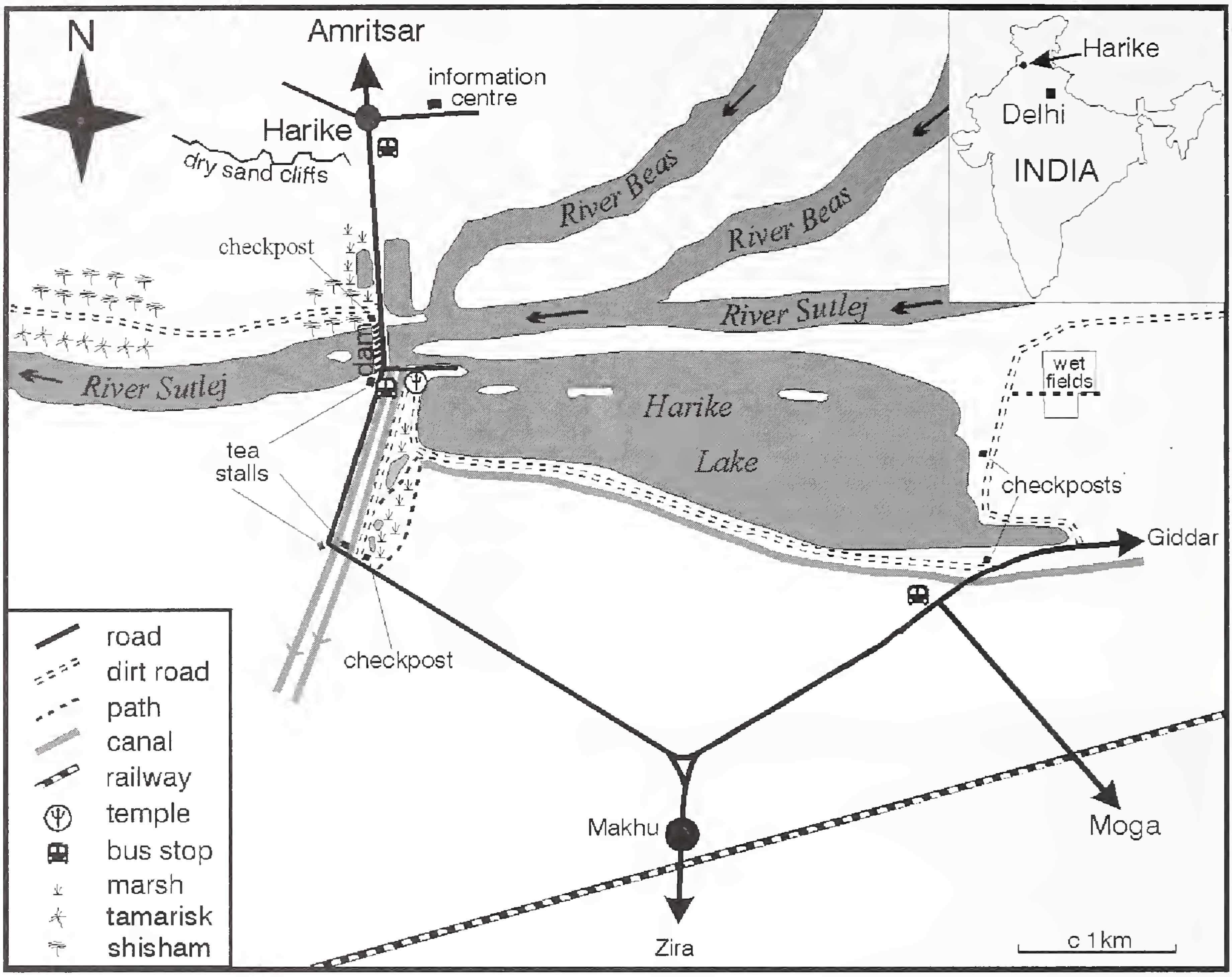
Birds of Harike
1: Sykes's Nightjar *Caprimulgus mahrattensis.*
2: Sykes's Nightjar habitat.
3: Sykes's Nightjar *C. mahrattensis* in flight.
4: Rufous-vented Prinia *Prinia burnesii.*
5: Male Sind Sparrow *Passer pyrrhonotus.*
6: Intermediate Egrets *Mesophoyx intermedia*, Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* and Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* at Harike Lake.
(Photos: Lionel Maumary)











reasonable lodges including Punjab Tourism's *Kaner Tourist Complex* Tel. 01636-24348, near Bhugipura By-pass, on the main road to Ludhiana. Other possibilities are the slightly more expensive *Hotel Samrat* Tel 01636-24343 on G.T. Road, the more central but uninspiring *Hotel Dev,* opposite the Civil Hospital, Main Bazaar or the basic *Hotel Pride* at Shahid Bhagat Singh Market on G.T. Road. At the village of Harike itself you may be allowed to stay in the double room at the Bird Sanctuary Information Centre though food is only available from the rather fly-blown tea stalls on the main road. You could also contact Mr Madho Singh at the Nanaksar-Ishar Dham Gurdwara Tel. 01682-52213, who might be able to arrange accommodation at the temple.

Strategy

A visit to Harike can be productive at any time of the year though the best time for winter visitors is from November to February. Two or three days should be enough to find most of the specialities, but a longer visit would give you time to explore more thoroughly and search for rarities. The months of September to November and March to May are good for passage migrants. The region experiences relatively little rainfall with most of it occurring from the end of June to September. Warm clothes are necessary in winter when night-time temperatures fall to zero. Permits are not required to visit the sanctuary.

Birds

The trees behind the temple usually hold wintering Yellow-eyed Pigeon until about 08.00 when they leave to feed in fields some distance away. Up to 2000 birds have been counted at Harike. You should not have too much difficulty in finding the subcontinental near-endemic Sind Sparrow in the shisham and acacia around here either. Check the lake for Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* (winter) and waterbirds including Indian Cormorant *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis* and Ferruginous Pochard *Aythya nyroca* (winter). Continue south looking out for Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus,* Yellow Bittern *I. sinensis* (summer), Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis,* Cetti's Bush and Moustached Warblers (winter) in the marshy scrub and reeds lining the canals. Rufous-vented Prinia also skulks here but is easily located by its distinctive up and down warbling and whistling song usually given around dawn and dusk.

Retrace your steps and cross the dam while checking the sandbars downstream for roosting gulls and terns. Heuglin's *Larus heuglini*, Yellow-legged *L. cachinnans*, Pallas's Gulls *L. ichthyaetus* (winter), Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (passage) and Black-bellied Tern *S. acuticauda* are regularly seen, while Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*, Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* and Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis* occasionally turn up on passage. This is also the best spot to see the increasingly rare Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* while one or two Wallcreepers *Tichodroma muraria* are seen on the dam itself every winter. Do not take a camera out while you are on the dam and make sure that any police who may be on guard understand that you are birdwatching and that your binoculars (*durbin* in the local Punjabi language) and telescope are not cameras.

A small shisham wood on the north side of the Sutlej and west of the main road is good for White-crowned Penduline Tit and Brooks's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus subviridis* is regularly seen there in winter. Other visitors at this time of year include Slaty-blue Flycatcher *Ficedula tricolor*, White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis*, Grey-hooded Warbler *Seicercus xanthoschistos*, Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*, Bar-tailed Treecreeper *Certhia himalayana* and Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*. During migration periods the trees teem with passerines: Red-breasted Flycatchers *Ficedula parva*, Sulphur-bellied Warblers *Phylloscopus griseolus*, Greenish Warblers *P. trochiloides*, Western-crowned Warblers *P. occipitalis*, Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolensis* and Common Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus*; regularly also seen are Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*, Ultramarine Flycatcher *Ficedula superciliaris*, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*, Asian Paradise-flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* and White-capped Bunting *Emberiza stewarti*. Just north of the wood is a small pond surrounded by reeds, bullrush and bushes, the preferred habitat of the Bristled Grassbird. A pair was located here in August 1997, but at present it is not known whether it is to be found at other times of the year as well.

Continue west along the sandy banks of the Sutlej through tamarisk scrub and encroaching cultivation. About 4-5 km from the dam the middle density tamarisk scrub is the habitat of the localised Sykes's Nightjar which roosts here at the base of the low tamarisk bushes in the daytime between February and June. Sand Lark *Calandrella raytal*, Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*, Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*, Tawny Pipit *A. campestris* (winter) and Long-billed Pipit *A. similis* (passage) are common; Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* has recently been proven to breed; Rufous-tailed Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* and Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* occur in winter and on passage. Keep a good lookout overhead for migrating raptors passing across the river. Great Thick-knee *Esacus recurvirostris* occurs on the sandbanks; Small Pratincoles *Glareola lactea* (summer) and River Terns *Sterna aurantia* are common. The area near the dry sand cliffs south-west of Harike village is good for Variable Wheatear *Oenanthe picata* (winter) and the subcontinental endemic Rufous-fronted Prinia *Prinia buchanani*.

If you have your own vehicle, you could drive down to the checkpost where the main road crosses the canal to check the marshy areas there and then drive to the eastern end of the lake. Just north of where the road turns south again towards Moga is another good spot for Cinnamon and Black Bitterns, crakes, Cetti's Bush and Moustached Warblers (winter).

Continuing east from the junction here along the paved road, turn left onto a dirt road just past the end of the lake. Before you reach the Sutlej River there are some fields on your right which are normally wet and therefore attract a lot of birds. In winter White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus*, Jack Snipe *Lymnocryptes minimus* and Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus* are common, while Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*, Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* and Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus* are regularly recorded. During the monsoon several Watercocks *Gallicrex cinerea* can be found in the flooded rice fields. This part of the river with its many islets holds large numbers of wintering and migrating ducks, waders, gulls and terns. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus*, Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* and White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* are regular. Rarities include Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* and Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*. Continuing further east on the paved road for about 10 km, you will reach Giddar bridge. Just before the bridge there are ponds and wet fields on both sides of the road which are rich in birds. In winter up to 33 Greater Painted-snipes have been found and there are several records of Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*. Check also the sandbars in the river since Indian Skimmers and Black-bellied Terns are regularly roosting here.

During peak periods more than 20,000 ducks have been counted at Harike. Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*, Common Teal *A. crecca*, Gadwall *A. strepera*, Eurasian Wigeon *A. penelope*, Northern Shoveler *A. clypeata*, Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* and Red-crested Pochard *Rhodonessa rufina* are among the most numerous. Most winters turn up the occasional rarity like Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*, Greater Scaup *Aythya marila* or Smew *Mergellus albellus*.

Keep an eye out throughout the area for raptors. Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* (winter/passage), White-eyed Buzzard *Butastur teesa*, Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus* (winter), Booted Eagle *H. pennatus* (winter/passage), Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* (winter/passage), Imperial Eagle *A. heliaca* (winter), Greater Spotted Eagle (winter), Lesser Spotted Eagle *A. pomarina*, Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* (winter/passage), Pallid Harrier *C. macrourus* (winter/passage), Eurasian Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus* (winter/passage), Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* (passage), Merlin *Falco columbarius* (winter), Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus* (winter/passage) and Red-necked Falcon *F. chicquera* (rare) are regular, but Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* (passage), Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos* (winter) and Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus* (passage) have also been seen.

Other notable species: Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* (winter), Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*, Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*, Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*, Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* (summer), Sirkeer Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus leschenaultii* (rare), Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*, Dusky Eagle Owl *B. coromandus*, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* (common August–November), Singing Bushlark *Mirafra cantillans* (summer), Rufous-winged Bushlark *M. assamica*, Hume's Short-toed Lark *Calandrella acutirostris* (winter), Striated Babbler *Turdoides earlei*, Striated Grassbird *Megalurus palustris*, White-tailed Stonechat *Saxicola leucura*, Black-headed Munia *Lonchura malacca* and Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps* (passage).

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Little Gull *Larus minutus*, Mew Gull *L. canus*, Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Eurasian Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* are among the national rarities that have been discovered at Harike.

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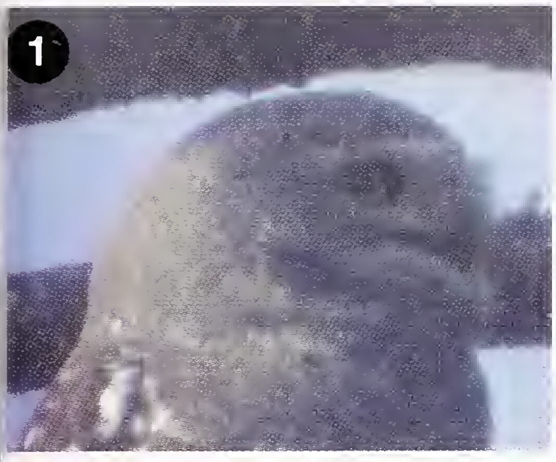

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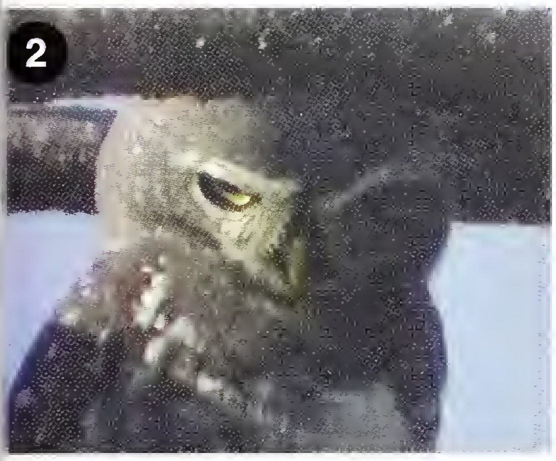

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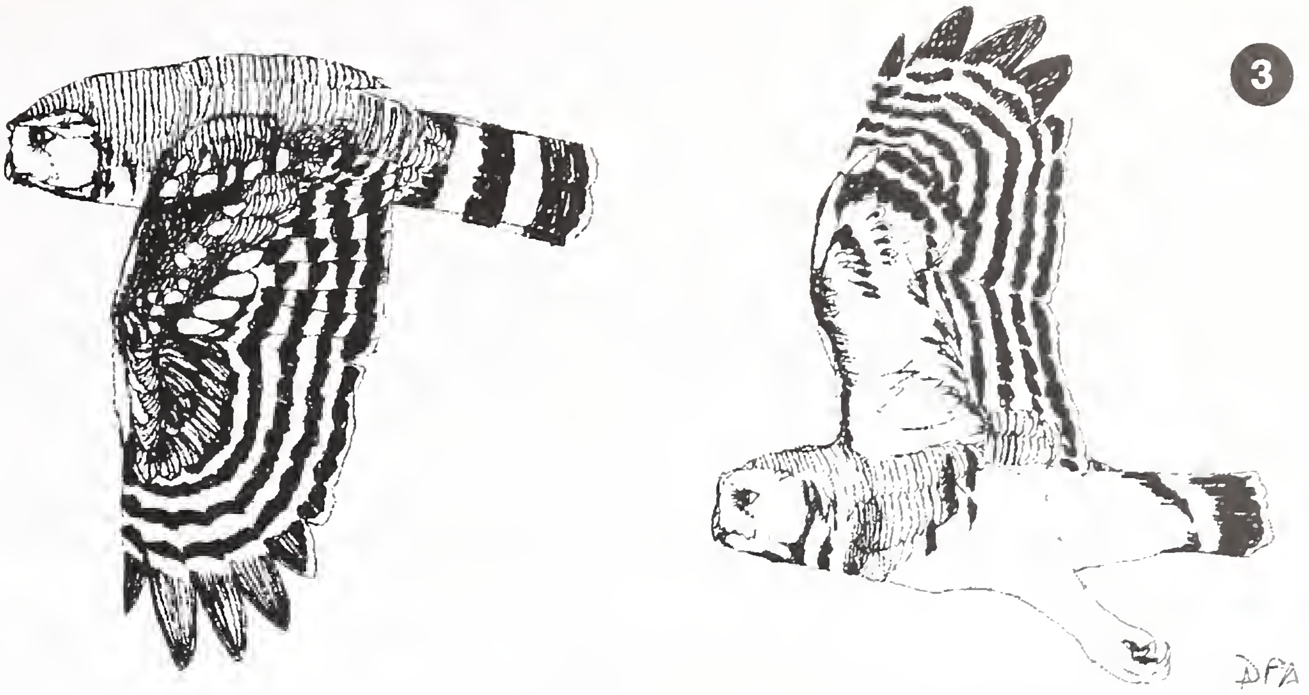

1 and 2: Forest Owlet *Athene blewitti.* (Photos: David Abbott & Pamela Rasmussen)
3: Forest Owlet *Athene blewitti* in flight. (Sketches: David Abbott)
4: Lesser Adjutant *Leptotilus javanicus.* (Photo: Peter Carr)
5: Lesser Adjutant chick *Leptotilus javanicus* near Prek Toal, Cambodia. (Photo: Dr T. Mundkur)
6: Xinjiang Ground-jay *Podoces biddulphi.* (Photo: Ma Ming)

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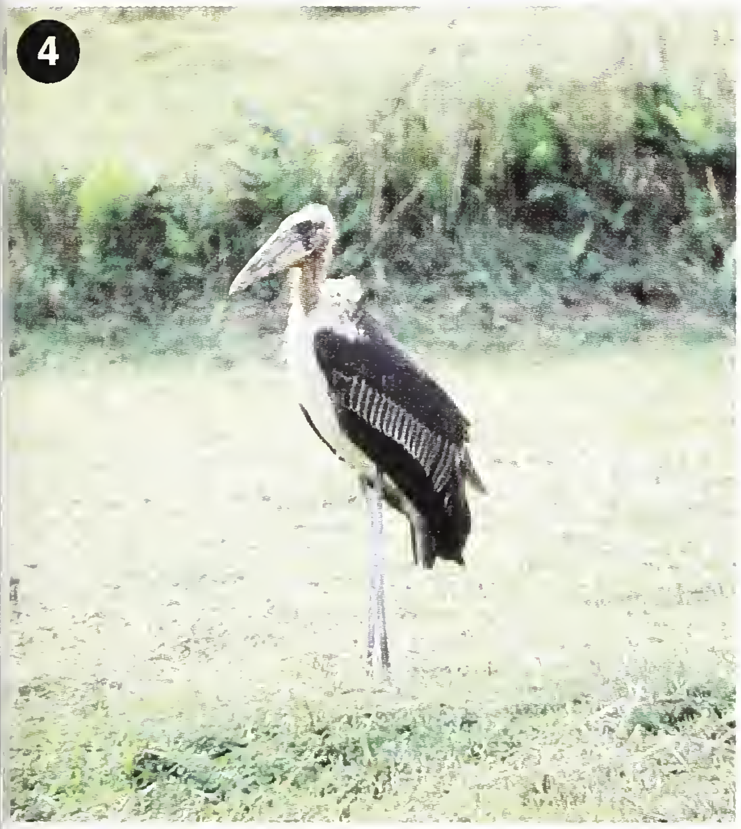

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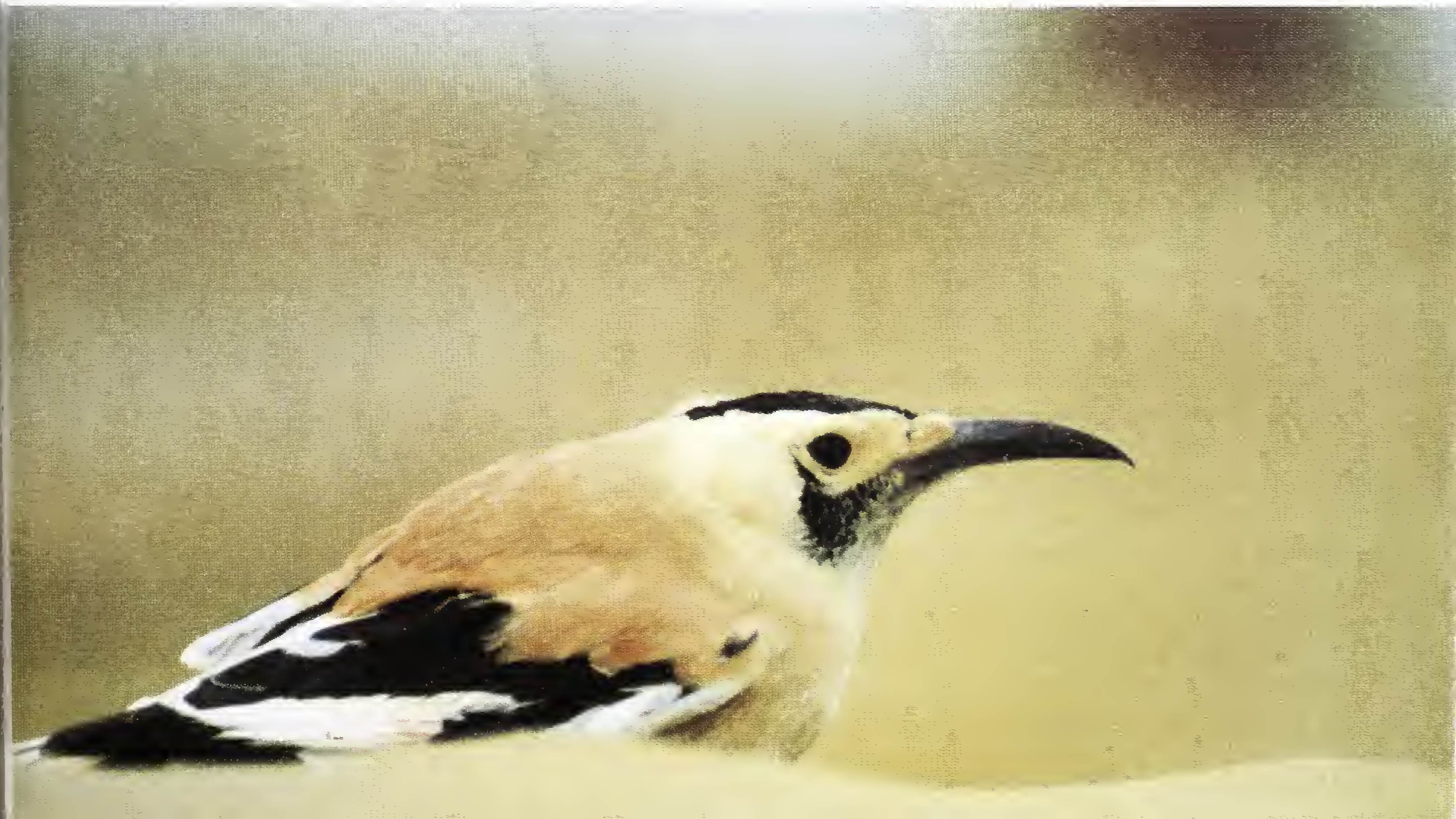
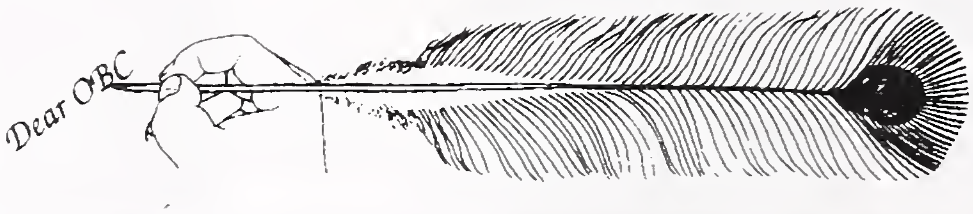


To the Editor



First observations of the endemic subspecies of Black-fronted White-eye on Sangihe, North Sulawesi

The family Zosteropidae is represented on the island of Sangihe by a single species. The Sangihe Black-fronted White-eye *Zosterops nehrkorni* was described in 1888 by Blasius on the strength of the single type specimen, collected by Platen in the Manganitu district of southern Sangihe.[1] This taxon has since been considered the *nehrkorni* race of the Black-fronted White-eye *Zosterops atrifrons*.[2] However, no examples are to be found in museum collections as the unique type specimen, originally housed at Braunschweig Museum in Germany, has been lost.[1] There are no records to indicate that white-eyes on Sangihe had been seen by ornithologists[2] prior to observations made by F. R. Lambert on Gunung Sahengbalira, southern Sangihe in August 1996. Although recordings were made of the birds' vocalisations, the white-eyes were not observed in detail (F. R. Lambert pers. comm.).

The Action Sampiri – Sangihe and Talaud Conservation Project, which received an OBC small grant, worked on Sangihe from October to December 1996 investigating the island's remaining forest. On 10th November 1996, during fieldwork on Gunung Sahengbalira, southern Sangihe, we discovered three white-eyes moving quickly along the mountain ridge. The observations were made in sub-montane primary forest at an elevation of about 900 m. The three birds were seen clearly in good light, feeding in the sub-canopy for about two minutes. Supposed plumage features of this endemic race were corroborated and new features noted. The Sangihe birds were found to be very distinct from the nominate race *Z. a. atrifrons* of mainland Sulawesi.

The birds' upperparts were a rich olive-green with a striking yellow-green rump, and a darker green-black tail. The forehead was black, with thick white spectacles around the eye. The chin, throat and undertail coverts were a bright canary yellow, the rest of the underparts being a pearly white, with grey flanks, which were darker ventrally. The bill and legs were a pale orange-flesh colour and relatively bright. The birds' contact call appeared to be thinner and higher-pitched than those of the nominate race.

The Sangihe birds differ from other races of *Z. atrifrons* by being slightly larger, brighter in plumage and with different bare part coloration.[1] We observed large numbers of the nominate race at Tomohon, Minahasa, North Sulawesi, in April 1997, and found that although there is some individual variation in coloration, all birds had olive-yellow throats and undertail coverts, dirty white underparts, dark bills and grey legs. These features were also noted for recently fledged juvenile birds. Whereas the nominate race is common from sea level to 800 m, being present in gardens in Manado and in flocks of up to 50 birds in the Tomohon area, the Sangihe birds appear to be much more specialised. In two weeks spent in the forest on Gunung Sahengbalira, Sangihe, the white-eyes were only encountered on two occasions, being seen only once. F. R. Lambert (pers. comm.) observed the birds only twice in four days and these may have been the same individuals. Two months on the island showed the bird to be absent from secondary habitats such as mixed plantations. Indeed, the white-eye on Sangihe appears to be uncommon and confined to sub-montane forest in the south of the island. This would also be supported by the fact that the original collectors did not secure a large series for museum collections, but only a single specimen.

Due to these ecological differences and the marked plumage differences from the other races of *Zosterops atrifrons*, the Sangihe birds may well prove to be the separate species that they were originally described as. The Action Sampiri Project will return to Sangihe in 1998 and aims to find out more about this enigmatic bird's true taxonomy and range.

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Notes on the trade of large waterbirds for food in Cambodia

Throughout much of Asia populations of large waterbirds have declined due to human pressure. Several species have declined so dramatically that they are now classified as threatened, including some which are restricted to South-East Asia. Cambodia, unlike Thailand and Vietnam two of its neighbouring countries, has seen very little drainage or major disturbances to its major wetlands. This has resulted in it retaining large areas of pristine wetland habitat which sustain breeding populations of globally threatened species such as Greater Adjutant *Leptoptilus dubius*, Lesser Adjutant *L. javanicus* and Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*.

An alarming twist of fate for these vestigial populations has been highlighted by Mundkur *et al.*,[1] who noted declines in several species of large waterbirds in Cambodia, particularly in the region of the most important wetland in South-East Asia, the Tonlé Sap. As noted in Mundkurs' work and in casual observations made by Carr,[2] one of the reasons for these declines is likely to be the harvesting of chicks for food from breeding colonies around the Tonlé Sap.

Observations by Carr, who resided on a house boat moored in the southern reaches of the Tonlé Sap between April and June 1993, revealed a small but steady flow of waterbirds destined for the pot departing the lake south. These birds were caged if very small or, if large enough to fend for themselves, tethered to sam-pans. These observations, totalling 34 birds, were of Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, with the exceptions of 6 Painted Storks *Mycteria leucocephala*, 2 Black-headed Ibises *Threskiornis melanocephalus* and 2 very young chicks thought to be pond-herons *Ardeola* sp.[2]

Observations in 1994 revealed[1] that the trade in large waterbird chicks for food appeared to be prevalent in the northern half of the Tonlé Sap, centred around a fishing village called Prek Toal. Villagers collected chicks from the colonies in the nearby flooded forest and reared them as domestic livestock, trading them on to other fishermen who visited the village. Table 1 gives the details of the number of birds being raised for food in Prek Toal on 30th March 1994.

Table 1: *Species and numbers of birds observed being reared for food at Prek Toal, Cambodia, 30th March 1994.*

Species	Number
Spot-billed Pelican	4
Indian Shag	3
Painted Stork	561
Greater Adjutant	4
Lesser Adjutant	17
Black-headed Ibis	17
Purple Swamphen	2
Brown-headed Gull	1

Assessing the impact of the harvesting is extremely difficult without having undertaken long term studies of the size of the colonies and the numbers of chicks being taken. It may be that the harvesting of the colonial nesting waterbird chicks around the Tonlé Sap is a time-honoured tradition and is undertaken in a sustainable fashion. Questioning the villagers who reap the harvests appeared to counter this theory. All who were asked stated they took whatever they could reach and as often as they could reach them, throughout the entire breeding season.

Assumptions are easy. However, since the last ornithological census in the 1960s of the Tonlé Sap region,[3] most of the colonial nesting species have dramatically declined. Between the 1960s and 1990s Cambodia has faced severe hardship and starvation. It may be that the two are linked.

The Greater Adjutant recently had its world population estimated as 400 individuals[4] and is the rarest stork in the world. One percent of the known world population was being fattened for the pot in Prek Toal. Similarly, though not quite so close to extinction, the pelican and Lesser Adjutant are also globally threatened species. Any loss to their numbers must be significant in survival terms.

The sad irony is that although the plight of these endangered species is now known, it is unlikely, due to the increased tension within Cambodia, particularly in the north and west of the country, that anything can be done to prevent it. Government legislation, as recommended by Mundkur,[1] is unlikely to happen and would be virtually impossible to police. Research work at

Prek Toal into the effects of the harvesting cannot be recommended in view of the recent upsurge in the kidnapping of foreigners. It appears the only course of action open to concerned conservation bodies is once again to wait until the country stabilises itself enough to allow people free access. Then, hopefully, one of the highest priorities will be to carry out a full census of the waterbirds of the Tonlé Sap, and to assess to what extent the annual harvest of chicks in this internationally important area is having on its populations.

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Rediscovery of an Indian enigma: the Forest Owlet

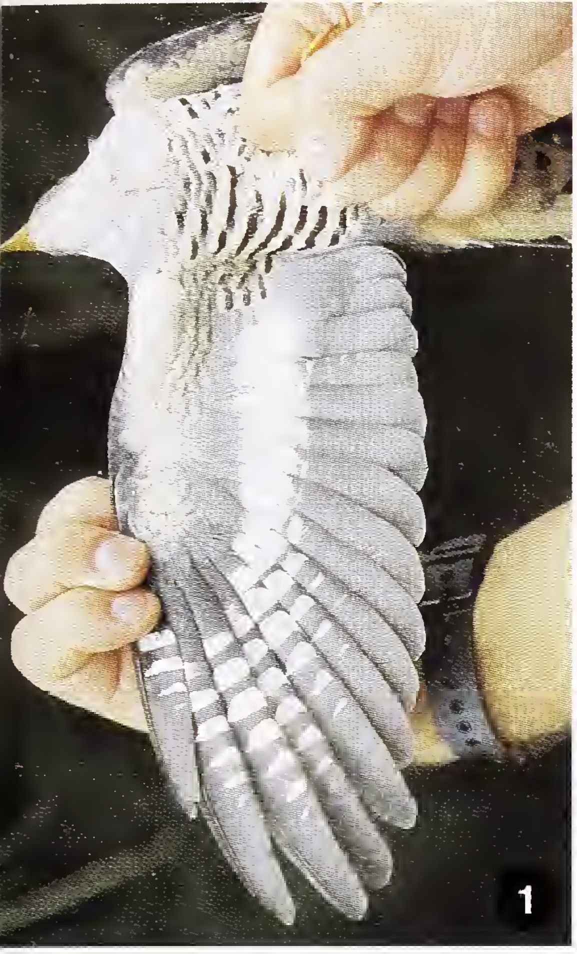
This bird was not discriminated by me, but three specimens were included among those of brama *sent to Mr Hume. From the dates of the specimens I remember very distinctly about them. All were shot in the heavy jungle below the Satpuras, and all were shot late in the morning sitting alone on the tops of thin trees. This being such an extraordinary position for* brama *I shot the birds to make sure, but not having specimens of* brama *to compare them with, stupidly took for granted they were only* brama. *They are not uncommon in this dense jungle, and I have repeatedly seen others sitting on exposed trees. I do not think they are found in the Akrani [hills] or higher Satpuras, as I have never seen any Owl of the* brama *type there.*[1]

Until November 1997, the above was nearly all that was known about the Forest Owlet *Athene blewitti*. James Davidson, an official stationed in Western Khandesh, had assembled the sole collection of birds from north of the Tapti River between Taloda and Shirpur, which happened to include the first three Forest Owlet specimens from western India. Only two other specimens had ever been collected, far to the east. None of the three collectors – Davidson, Blewitt and Ball – were professional ornithologists, and Davidson seemed a self-taught bird preparator, inventing odd techniques no one else used. After 1884, many years elapsed without any records of *Athene blewitti*. Whistler and Ticehurst, despite their comprehensive coverage of most Indian species in the monograph they were preparing, had only included one short reference on the species before their untimely deaths in the early 1940s.[2] In 1952, S. Dillon Ripley wrote *the fact that no new information has come to light... is not evidence that the owlet is extinct.*[3] And then, sometime after the 1961 publication of the *Synopsis*,[4] Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen informed Dr Salim Ali and Ripley that he had taken one at Mandvi, Gujarat, in 1914. This record appeared to extend the range of the Forest Owlet right across the top of the Indian peninsula.

In 1974 Ripley and Ali began seriously laying plans to search for the owlet[5] and in the next two years they worked in forests along the Mahanadi River about 50 miles east of the type locality; at Melghat;[6] and briefly in the Shahada Forest Division about 80 miles north of Dhulia, finding there that most of the area around the hills as well as along the river was completely devoid of any original forest.[7] That April, Ripley sent S. A. Hussain to Meinertzhagen's locality, which was apparently once heavily forested, but there was no trace of this forest now except for a small undulating terrain of thin forest surrounded by cultivation.[8] All these efforts met with the same result: no sign of the Forest Owlet.

Following this, several authors considered the species extinct. Not until Nigel Collar of BirdLife International and I discovered that Meinertzhagen's specimen was actually Davidson's fifth specimen, now remade and relabelled with false data, did we look further into the status of the Forest Owlet, when it gradually became evident that none of the four genuine sites had been searched!

In October 1997, Ben King (American Museum of Natural History) and David Abbott indicated they could join a search in November, and it seemed there would never be a better opportunity. Ben was especially keen as the Forest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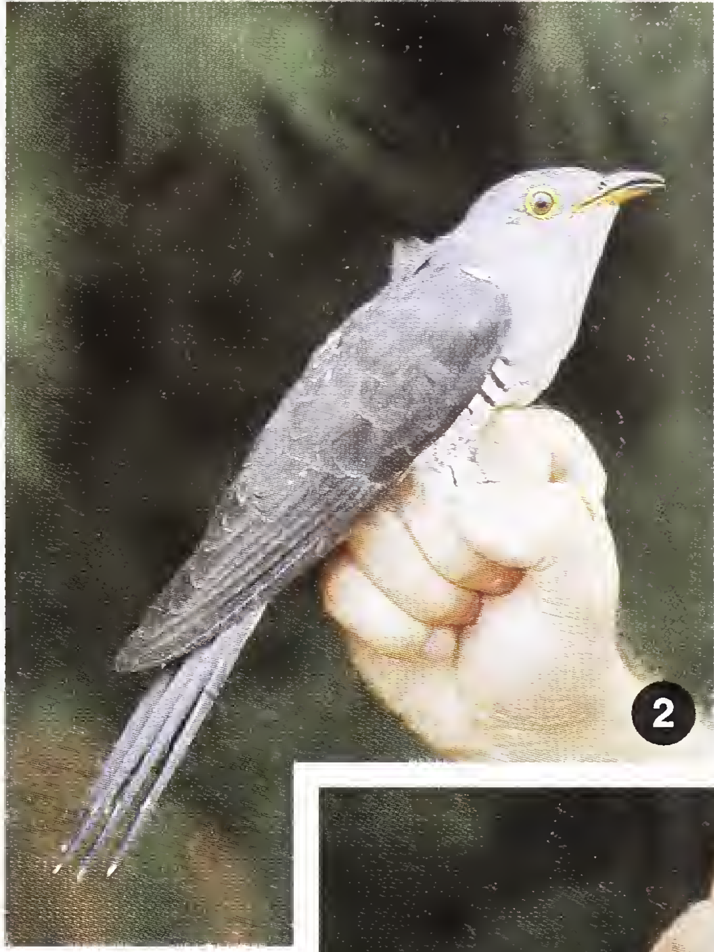
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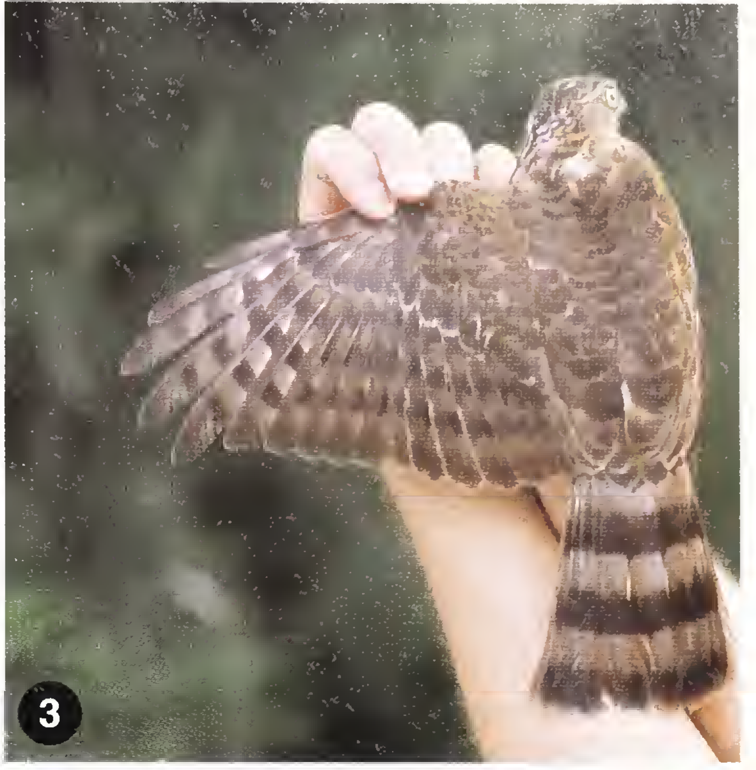
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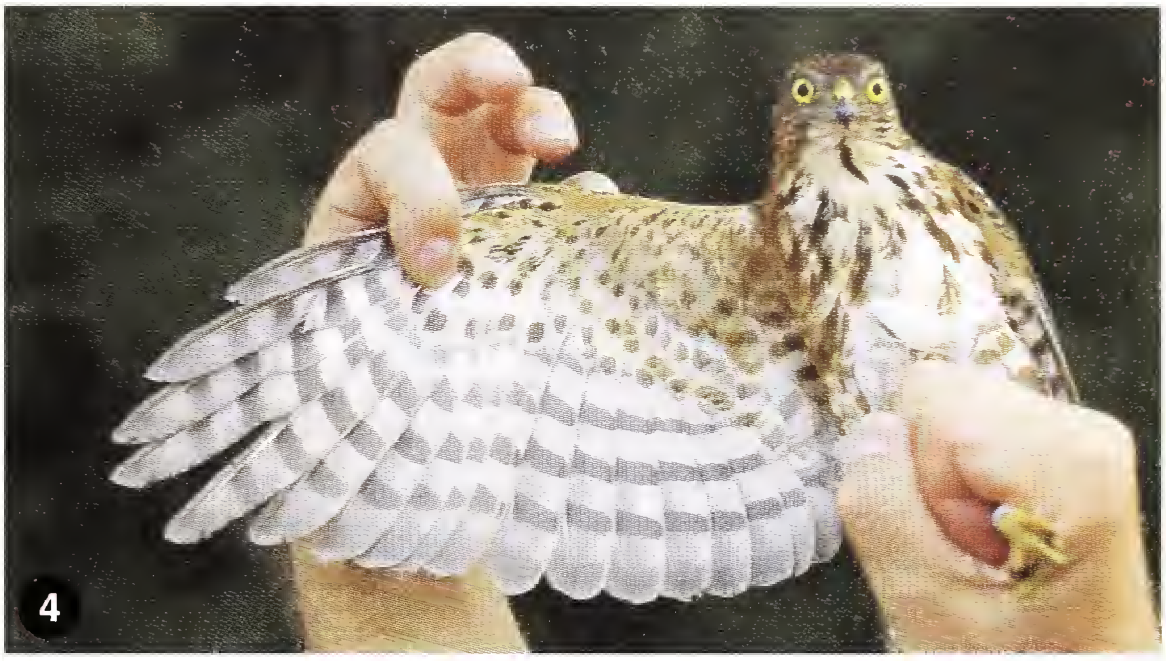
Wing of Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus.*
Oriental Cuckoo *C. saturatus.*
Upperwing of Besra *Accipiter virgatus*
Underwing of Besra *A. virgatus*
hotos: Peter Kennerley)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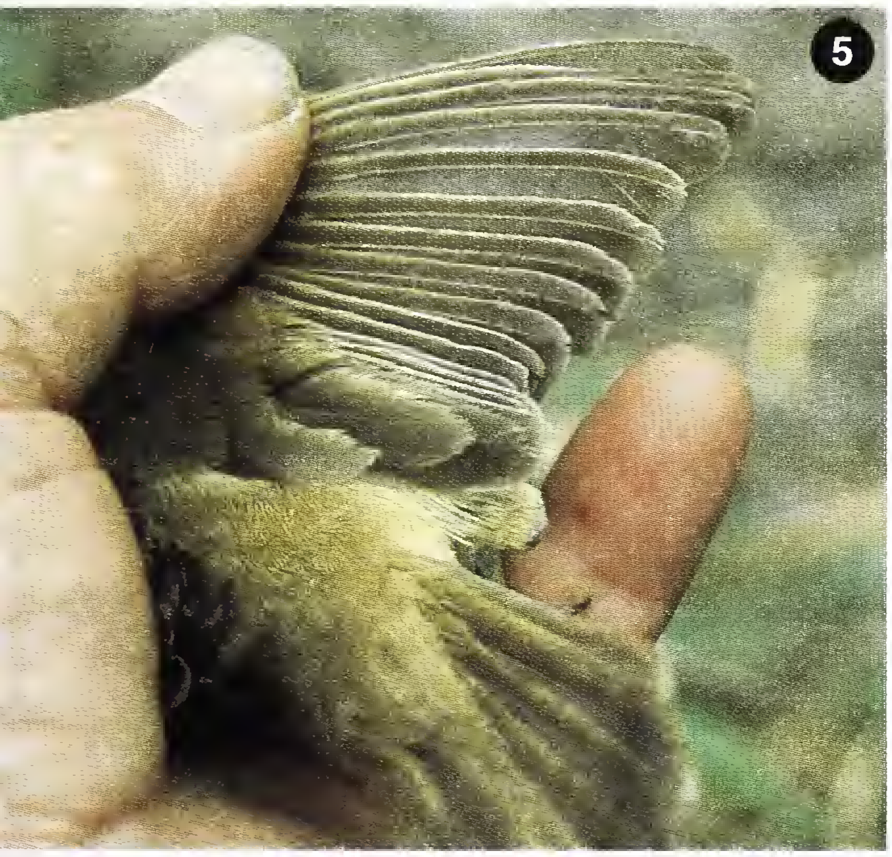
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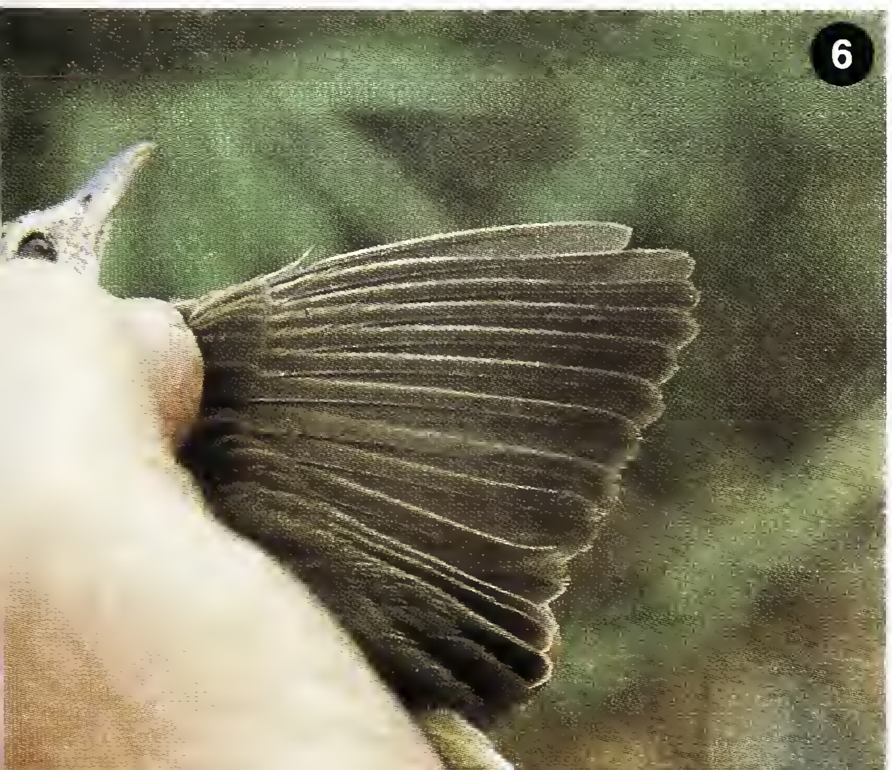
5: Wing of Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis.*
6: Wing of Clamorous Reed Warbler *A. stentoreus harterti.*
7: Comparison of Oriental Reed Warbler *A. orientalis* (top) and Clamorous Reed Warbler *A. stentoreus harterti.*
(Photos: C Carter)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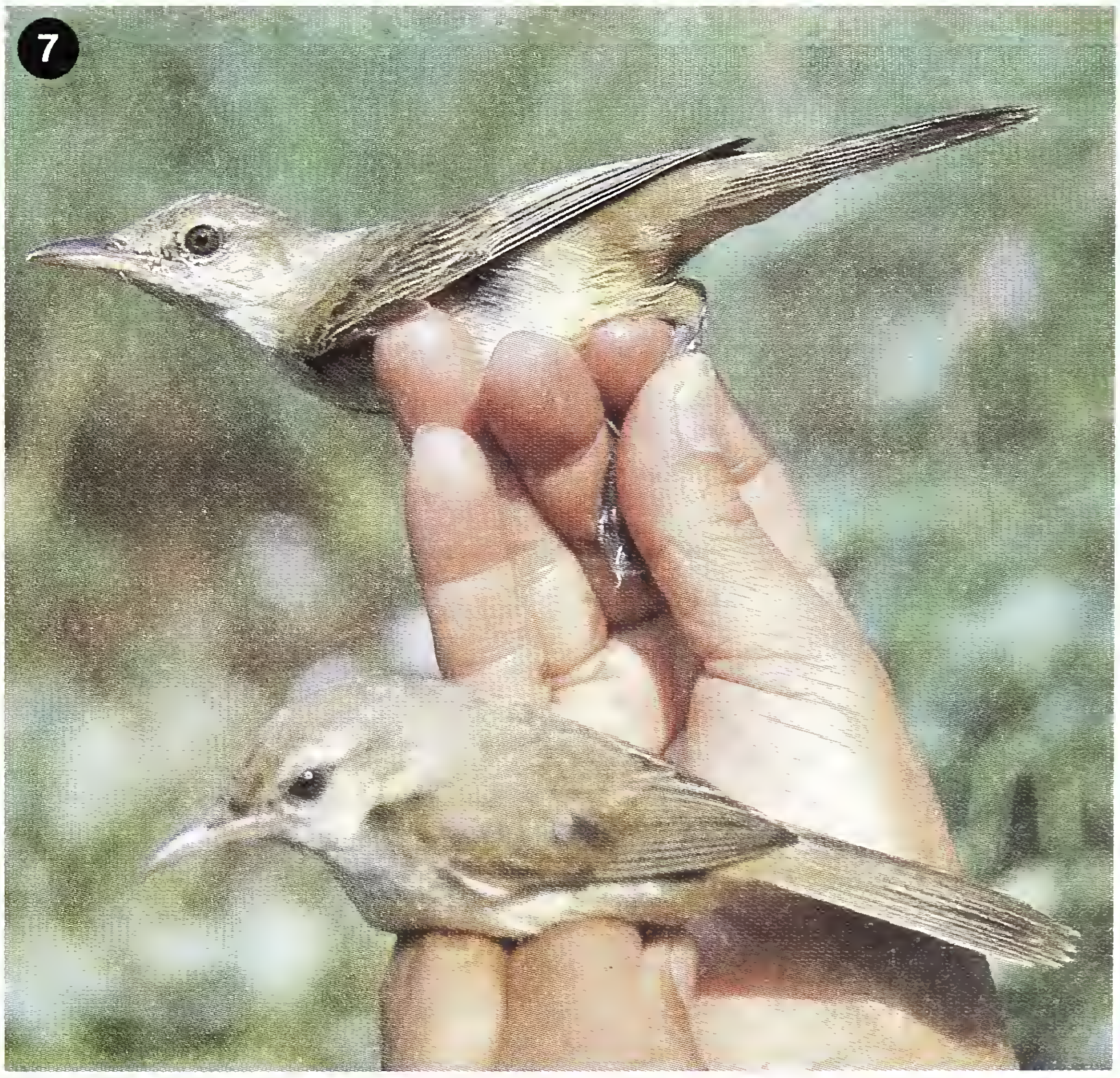
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Owlet was the only tropical mainland Asian species he'd never seen. However, one of my museum colleagues rated our chances as just one in ten, and another gave us one in a hundred.

Starting on 13th November we spent ten days searching near the two eastern sites. Although it frequently seemed that at any moment our luck could change, it did not. With little time left, we drove west to Shahada, where Davidson had collected one specimen. Sadly the plains were entirely deforested, so we searched in the nearby degraded low foothills forest. In the middle of what had been already been a good morning for common birds, Ben quietly pointed out an owlet that he said was worth a close look. There, sitting near the top of a bare tree in the sun, was a small, chunky owl with short heavily white-feathered legs and huge claws, nearly unspotted grey-brown crown and mantle, strongly banded wings and tail, and contrasting underparts pattern; in short, everything necessary to make it a Forest Owlet. Hesitant at first to believe our eyes, and sure the bird would fly, David and I both started videotaping almost immediately; I approached it from below while David taped through his scope. However, it was utterly co-operative and only departed half an hour later when harassed by a roller, by which time my shaking arms could hardly hold the camera up. This near-mythical bird, which had already been surrounded by so many surprises, had done it again. It had survived, unseen by ornithologists for over a century and despite the loss of its plains habitat.

What does the future hold for the Forest Owlet? The fact that we found two individuals in fairly degraded hill forest seems hopeful; however, much more information is required to assess its true status, range and requirements. Considering its distinctive appearance and conspicuous habits, it is probably rare and local, or it could scarcely have escaped notice for so long. Surveys are urgently needed in order to promote its conservation, and strengthening of the protection of the single known site, which is actively undergoing degradation, will be essential.

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Identification of large *Acrocephalus* warblers at Candaba Swamp, Luzon, Philippines

The winter population of large reed warblers at Candaba Swamp, Central Luzon, Philippines, was examined by catching a sample with mist-nets. Though specific identification of these birds was difficult in the field, they were readily separable in the hand into the winter visitor Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis* and the resident Clamorous Reed Warbler *A. stentoreus*. The former species appeared to constitute the majority of the population.

Introduction

Candaba Swamp, Pampanga Province, about 90 km north of Manila, is a large, low-lying area which floods during the rainy season, June to December, then dries out quickly and is used extensively for agriculture, mainly rice paddies and water melons. Much of the water is impounded and distributed along channels for irrigation during the growing season. Some marsh vegetation always remains along the margins of the channels and in the uncultivated lower-lying areas.

Visit reports by Turton[1] and by Hornbuckle[2] recorded the presence only of Oriental Reed Warbler at Candaba whilst that of Lewis[3] recorded 30 of this species and also two Clamorous Reed Warbler.

DuPont treated the two taxa as subspecies of Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus* separable by size and the more rufous coloration of Clamorous Reed Warbler.[4]

King *et al.*, treating Clamorous Reed Warbler as a separate species but Oriental Reed Warbler still as a subspecies of Great Reed Warbler, were of the opinion that the two were probably indistinguishable in the field but separable in the hand by examination of wing formulae.[5]

Dickinson *et al.* list one endemic race of Clamorous Reed Warbler *A. s. harterti* in the Philippines, reported from Luzon but not recorded as breeding there.[6] Oriental Reed Warbler is accepted for most islands including Luzon although sight records for some are rejected because of the possibility of confusion with Clamorous Reed Warbler.

My wife and I visited Candaba during February and March 1995, sleeping in a farmer's hut in the paddies. We decided to attempt to ascertain whether only one or both species were present. We soon accepted that we could not rely on our field observations specifically to identify the frequently seen large reed warblers with certainty. Since we had mist-nets with us we decided to catch as many as possible for examination by the criteria given by duPont[4] and by King *et al.*[5]

Methods and results

Three morning mist-netting sessions were carried out. During sessions one and two, wing and tarsus lengths of the 13 birds caught were measured. It was evident that neither allowed separation of the birds into two groups.

During the third session, in addition the wing formulae of the 18 birds caught were compared by measuring the distance between the tips of the sixth and ninth primaries (numbered descendantly from the midwing towards the wingtip) for comparison with King *et al.*[5] In one bird the primaries were so worn that an accurate measurement was not possible. The other 17 were readily separable into Oriental Reed Warbler with a long pointed wing in which the ninth primary is longer than the sixth (Plate 5, p. 51) and Clamorous Reed Warbler with a blunter, more rounded wing in which the ninth primary is shorter than the sixth (Plate 6, p. 51). The measurements of these 17 reed warblers (RW) are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 *Biometrics (mm) of Oriental and Clamorous Reed Warblers at Candaba Swamp*

	Oriental RW	**Clamorous RW**
No of birds	13	4
Wing	80 - 90	71 - 79
Tarsus	26-30	25-27
P9 *cf* P6	P9 > P6 (1 - 2)	P9 < P6 (4 - 7)

The wing length ranges of the two species did not overlap. Though this result cannot be extrapolated to the whole population, it is interesting to note that on this basis the 13 birds caught during sessions one and two would consist of nine Oriental Reed Warbler and four Clamorous Reed Warbler, supporting the conclusion that the majority of the population consists of the former species.

Discussion

Since this population of large reed warblers, which I had not been able to identify specifically by general field observation, had been shown to consist of two species by examination in the hand, it may be useful to consider which characters should be compared for successful field identification.

Shirihai *et al.* discuss the identification and taxonomy of large *Acrocephalus* warblers which occur in the Western Palearctic region.[7] There are three breeding species, Great Reed Warbler, Clamorous Reed Warbler (as three subspecies, nominate *stentoreus*, *levantina* and *brunnescens*) and Basra Reed Warbler *A. griseldis*. Two species occur as vagrants, Oriental Reed Warbler and Thick-billed Warbler *A. aedon*. In the Philippines the problem is the separation of Oriental Reed Warbler and Clamorous Reed Warbler (subspecies *harterti*). Thick-billed Warbler is not listed by Dickinson *et al.*[6] but has occurred once in Japan[8] and should be borne in mind as a possibility in the Philippines. It is, however, a distinctive species in general appearance and biometric detail.

Shirihai *et al.*[7] state that Oriental and Clamorous Reed Warblers are often confused and

Table 2: *Characters for the field identification of Oriental and Clamorous Reed Warblers (after Shirihai* et al. *1995).*

	Oriental RW	**Clamorous RW**
Throat/breast	Frequently streaked	Unstreaked
Bill	Short, broad	Long, slender, pointed
Underparts	Pale, whitish	More deeply coloured
Tail feathers	Pale tipped	Pale tips less/lacking
Tail length	Proportionally short	Proportionally longer
Primary projection	Long	Short
Tail graduation	Moderate	Slightly more rounded

recommend a number of characters for comparison, listed in Table 2.

Shirihai *et al.* also mention that the distinction is more difficult when the paler, greyer and short-billed *A. s. brunnescens* is involved.[7] The Philippines *A. s. harterti* is also short-billed – small birds inhabit the Philippines[8] so bill length may be less useful here also. Leg coloration is useful in the separation of Great and Clamorous Reed Warblers which have brownish and greyish legs respectively, but Oriental Reed Warbler has greyish legs like those of Clamorous Reed Warbler.

With experience and good enough views to allow systematic examination using the characters in Table 2, accurate field identifications should be possible especially if both species are present. Comparison in the hand of individuals identified by wing formulae is illustrated in Plate 7, p. 51.

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank the farmers of Candaba who let us sleep in their hut, did our shopping, showed us suitable sites for mist-netting and found us bamboos for use as mist-net poles. Without them this study would not have been possible.

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Besra at Tuas, Singapore on 26th November 1995

On the first net round on the morning of 26th November 1996 I disturbed an *Accipiter* from the outside of the trapping area at Tuas, Singapore. It flew low through the *Casuarina* wood in the direction of the trapping line and when I reached the nets the bird was already caught. Upon extracting it, I was surprised at its bulk which was larger and heavier than a male Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis*, several of which I had previously trapped in the autumn.

A preliminary examination of plumage features and the short primary projection showed the bird bore a distinct resemblance to Besra *A. virgatus* which I am familiar with in the hand from my ringing activities in Hong Kong. On reference to King *et al.*[1] the critical position of the second primary relative to the sixth primary provided fairly conclusive evidence that the bird was indeed a Besra. The plumage features indicated it to be a first winter bird and the weight pointed to it being a male. The bird was ringed as a Besra, measured, photographed and released. It was also seen in the hand by Alfred Chia, Kenneth Kee, William Legge, Elizabeth Low and Richard Ollington.

Description

Forecrown, crown and rear crown dark brown with narrow rufous-brown fringes producing a streaked appearance. Ear coverts and lores plain, unmarked grey-brown. Indistinct pale brown supercilium extending to nape. Sides of neck and nape dark brown with broader and paler fringes than shown on crown. Nape showed white bases to feathering, appearing as white patches. Mantle, scapulars, median and lesser coverts dark brown with conspicuous and fairly broad rufous-brown fringes. Primary and greater coverts similar but tips whiter. Rump and uppertail coverts as mantle. Upper surface of tail pale brown with four dark brown bars of equal width to the paler intervening bars, (Japanese invariably shows narrower dark bars). Upper surface of primaries and secondaries barred dark brown and light brown.

Chin and throat white with a broad, dark mesial stripe down the centre of the throat. Breast white with conspicuous broad dark brown streaks. Flanks heavily and broadly barred rufous brown. Belly and undertail coverts white, spotted with large rufous-brown spots. Underwing coverts warm buffy-brown spotted with rufous-brown. Underside of primaries and secondaries barred grey and white.

Bare parts. Iris yellow. Eyering yellow, narrow. Cere yellow. Legs and feet yellow.

Measurements (mm)

Wing formulae measured ascendantly.
(P1 = outermost primary. P10 = innermost primary)

P1	PC+38
P2	-26
P3	-8
P4	WP
P5	WP
P6	-19
P7	-28
P8	-34
P9	-38
P10	-41

Emarginated primaries = P3, P4 and P5
Primary projection beyond the longest secondary = 35 mm
Wing length (maximum chord) 176 mm
Tail length 145 mm
Wing/tail ratio =176/145 = 1.21
Weight 120 grams
Tarsus diameter 4.8 mm

Discussion

Although they share very similar plumages, Japanese Sparrowhawk and Besra are readily separable in the hand by comparing measurements of the wing and tail. Based upon experience gained with both species in Hong Kong, Leader and Carey have demonstrated[2] that an *Accipiter* with a wing/tail ratio of less than 1.3 is a Besra while a ratio greater than 1.35 fits Japanese Sparrowhawk. Furthermore, they also conclude that a comparison of wing/tail ratio against body weight gives a better indication of the body proportions and bulk of the two species.

With a wing/tail ratio of 1.21 and a weight of 120 grams, the bird at Tuas falls exclusively into the range of male Besra as shown by Leader and Carey.[2] Furthermore the wing formulae also shows that P2 at 26 mm short of the wing point is shorter than P6 which falls only 19 mm short of the wing point. These relative positions are characteristic of Besra.[1]

This is the first record of Besra for Singapore and apparently also the first record from the Malay Peninsula. Medway and Wells[3] include Besra in an appendix which includes controversial records and state there is no conclusive evidence that *A. virgatus* occurs in the Peninsula. All previous claims of Besra from the Malay Peninsula appear to relate to either specimens of unknown provenance or misidentifications.

A photograph of the bird trapped on 26th November 1995 is shown in Plates 3 and 4, p.51.

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Oriental Cuckoos at Tuas, Singapore on 21st October and 2nd December 1995

As part of a migration study programme I have been trapping and ringing migrants passing through the Tuas area of Singapore since 1994. While ringing there on 21st October 1995 I trapped an adult Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*. The bird was ringed, measured and released. Unfortunately no camera was available to photograph this bird. I also trapped two first winter Indian Cuckoos *C. micropterus* on the same day and was able to compare Oriental and Indian Cuckoos together in the hand. After release the bird perched in an open tree in full view for about 10 minutes allowing excellent telescope views at a distance of around 40 metres but was not seen subsequently. This bird was also seen by Richard Ollington and William Legge.

A second Oriental Cuckoo was trapped at Tuas on 2nd December 1995 and was seen in the hand by Richard Ollington, Angus Lamont and Alan Owyong. The bird was very similar to the Oriental Cuckoo trapped on 21st October 1995 but was aged as a second winter bird due to the retention of a single juvenile secondary on the right wing. The other obvious differences between these two birds were:

Iris colour; the bird trapped on 2nd December showed a grey-brown iris while that trapped on 21st October had a bright yellow-brown iris.

Colour of the underparts: the breast and belly of the first bird were more strongly washed with buff compared with the bird trapped on 2nd December.

The Tuas region of Singapore lies at the south-western corner of the island facing Sumatra and is a large landfill mostly devoid of trees apart from the grove of *Casuarina* where ringing takes place. As such, many birds are attracted into this small area and cuckoos in particular appear to find the woodland to their liking. It is likely that Oriental Cuckoo is a regular migrant through this part of Singapore in small numbers. Other migrant cuckoos trapped at the site during the autumn included two Large Hawk-cuckoos *Cuculus sparverioides*, four Hodgson's Hawk-cuckoos *C. fugax* Two Indian Cuckoos, 12 Chestnut-winged Cuckoos *Clamator coromandus* and single Plaintive Cuckoo *Cacomantis merulinus* and Drongo Cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris*.

Description in the hand of the bird trapped on 21st October 1995

Upperparts. Forehead, crown, nape, sides of head and ear coverts clear grey with a slight blue tinge. Mantle, rump, and uppertail coverts again clear mid-grey but very slightly darker than head and nape. Wing coverts, primaries and secondaries darker grey than mantle and lacking the blue tinge. The wings were uniform with no pale fringes or tips to the coverts. Central tail feathers blackish with series of white spots down centre. Remaining retrices blackish, darker at tip, paler at base and notched with white along the outer webs.

Underparts. Chin, throat and breast clear grey with a slight blue tinge as head. Lower breast and belly conspicuously barred black and pale buff. The black bars were approximately 3 mm wide and of equal width to the pale buff bars. The undertail coverts were more strongly washed buff with narrow black bars.

Bare parts. Upper mandible black. Lower mandible black at tip but yellow base. Feet bright yellow. Iris bright yellowish-brown, eyering bright yellow.

Description in the hand of the bird trapped on 2nd December 1995

Upperparts. Entire head pale grey and unmarked. Nape slightly darker than head. Mantle, rump, wing coverts and uppertail coverts darker grey, darkening slightly further along the primaries and secondaries which were slightly browner towards the tip. Tail dark grey tipped white and numerous white spots along the shafts.

Underparts. Chin, throat and upper breast paler grey and unmarked. Lower breast and belly pale buff, barred with black. The black bars were narrower than the intervening pale buff bars but not as narrow as those shown by Common Cuckoo *C. canorus*, in east Asia. Undertail coverts deep buff and broadly barred black. Underwing coverts pale buff, lightly barred. Underwing showed diagnostic white stripe along centre produced by white bases to secondaries and inner primaries which contrasted with the grey unmarked secondaries.

Bare parts. Upper mandible black. Lower mandible orange-yellow darkening towards the tip. Eyering yellow. Iris grey-brown. Legs yellow.

Comparison of measurements of the Oriental Cuckoos trapped at Tuas

Date	21st October	2nd December
Ring No.	P0007	P0026
Wing	188	186
Tail	155	155
Bill to feathering	21.0	23.6
Bill to skull	29.0	29.7
Bill width at base of nostrils	9.8	9.6
Bill depth at base of nostrils	8.5	8.3
Primary 1	PC+73	PC+65
Primary 2	-9	-9
Primary 3	WP	WP
Primary 4	-11	-8
Primary 5	-20	-18
Primary 6	-34	-37
Primary 7	-47	-48
Primary 8	-57	-58
Primary 9	-67	-68
Primary 10	-78	-78
Secondaries	-79	–

Neither bird showed emargination on the primaries.

A photograph of the bird trapped on 2nd December 1995 is shown in Plates 1 and 2, p.51.

Discussion

There are currently three species of *Cuculus* cuckoo on the list of accepted birds which have occurred in Singapore. Two of these, Hodgson's Hawk-cuckoo and Large Hawk-cuckoo are structurally distinct from the more typical *Cuculus* cuckoos and are not a source of confusion. Indian

Cuckoo is the only similar species previously recorded from Singapore, but the possibility of the other Asian *Cuculus* cuckoos, *viz*. Common Cuckoo and Little Cuckoo *C. poliocephalus* needs to be eliminated. Furthermore there is also a small race of Oriental Cuckoo *C. s. lepidus* resident in the mountains of South-East Asia including the Malay peninsula. Although unlikely to occur as a migrant in the lowlands of the Malay Peninsula, this form is readily separable from the migrant races by the deeper brown wash to the underparts and a wing length ranging between 141-153 mm in Borneo and 151-161 mm in Java, Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula.

The Oriental Cuckoo trapped on 21st October was aged as an adult by the lack of pale fringes to the upperparts including the mantle and wing coverts. These fringes are diagnostic when ageing adult and first winter cuckoos. Having established the bird was an adult, it proved straightforward to eliminate Indian Cuckoo which shows a brown wash to the upperparts and of course a distinct dark tail band across the tip of the tail. Common and Little Cuckoo are superficially similar to Oriental but neither shows the obvious buff wash to the underparts. Furthermore Common Cuckoo can also be eliminated by the greater width of the pale bars compared to the black bars on the underparts and the underwing pattern.[1]

Measurements are also diagnostic. Common Cuckoo of all subspecies will not show a wing length less than 200 mm while Little Cuckoo has a wing length[2] under 172 mm and both are therefore readily eliminated by this feature alone. It is also possible to establish that both the Oriental Cuckoos were both of the nominate subspecies by wing length. Vaurie[3] gives a wing of 183-193 mm with a mean of 188 mm for *saturatus* and 195-212 mm with a mean of 203.6 mm for *horsfieldi*. With a wing length of 186 mm and 188 mm these birds fall within the range of the nominate form of Oriental Cuckoo.

Examination of specimens in the National Reference Collection at the University of Singapore indicates both birds were fairly typical Oriental Cuckoos of the race *saturatus*. One bird in particular showed underparts with a similar pale buff wash to the underparts and width of the pale and dark barring.

Although Oriental Cuckoo has previously been suspected of occurring in Singapore, these records represent the first documented occurrences of the species. Elsewhere in the Malay Peninsula both migrant forms of Oriental Cuckoo are considered to be scarce passage migrants or winter visitors,[4] so the occurrence in Singapore is not unexpected.

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Editor's note: Whilst it is not the usual OBC policy to publish first records of this kind in the *Bulletin*, it was felt that the high quality of the photographs of these often tricky to identify species would be widely appreciated by the readership. Furthermore, there is some confusion as to whether an acceptable published or documented record of Oriental Cuckoo in Singapore exists, so this seems a good opportunity to publish these records. Both records have been submitted to the two relevant committees: the Records Committee and Birdline Singapore.

Xinjiang Ground-jay in the Taklimakan Desert

A successful Sino-Nipponian Exploratory Group journeyed through the Taklimakan Desert from the desert centre (39°27'N, 83°54'E) to Lop Village (39°27'N, 88°15'E) on 18th February to 25th March 1997. I was present in the desert for 45 days and recorded the wildlife throughout the journey. We were surprised to see several desert species flourishing even in the desert centre. The main vegetation comprised *Phragmites australis* (reed), *Tamarix taklamakansis*, *Poacynum* sp., *Scorzonera divaricata*, *Cynanchum kashgaricunum*, *Salsola* sp. and *Halogeton* sp.

We recorded about 26 species of animal of which only seven were true desert species, the rest being migrants and those attracted to humans. The true desert species were *Calandrella cheleensis* (Asian Short-toed Lark), *Podoces biddulphi* (Xinjiang Ground-jay), *Vulpes vulpes* (Red Fox), *Camelus ferus* (Wild Camel), *Lepus yarkandensis* (Tarim Hare), *Dipus sagitta* (Three-toed Jerboa) and a reptile, *Phrynocephalus axillaris*. We have shown that the Taklimakan is not completely inhospitable, indeed in the desert the birds and other animals survive by eating vegetation to obtain water indirectly.

We are very interested in the Xinjiang Ground-jay, also known as Biddulph's or White-tailed Ground-jay.[1] It is known from Xinjiang, western China, and is similar in size to Mongolian Ground-jay *P. hendersoni*. However, the Xinjiang differs from Mongolian in the tail colour and having a longer and thinner bill. Much of what is known about the bird comes from Frank Ludlow, who travelled in Xinjiang from 1929 to 1930 and found it to be common.

However, when Richard Grimmett travelled through the Tarim Basin in 1988, he wrote: '...we had expected to find the species without much difficulty. We failed to observe the species in the desert on the edge of the Kashi Oasis, and on the journey from Kashi to Aksu and Aksu to Korla. Three days were spent in the desert surrounding Agal without any success.' He suggested that the species had declined over the past half-century.[2]

In China, very few people have studied or know the species.[3,4] However the jay is a special and striking inhabitant of the undisturbed Taklimakan Desert and is well adapted to the hot and dry environment. We do not agree with Grimmett's original observation as it is still common in the desert today.

From February to March, just before the breeding season which lasts from March to May, we found the jay a few dozen times in the inner desert, from 84°E to 86°E following the line of approximately 39°N, about 900-1,200 metres above sea level. There, the desert habitat is quite soft with numerous sandy hills and some moderately high ridges (height about 70-150 metres). The jays like to run and fly, keeping low to the ground, at great speed. Their stride length is about 20-30 cm. They eat plant roots and seeds in winter, sometimes taking insects and reptiles in spring. The birds were fond of the steamed bread that we left for them.

When we explored the Taklimakan in 1988-1992, we collected five specimens of Xinjiang Ground-jay, one of which had a chronic parasitic infection in the eye. The following data were obtained (weights in g, measurements in mm).

No	1	2	3	4	5
Body weight	135	132	150	-	118
Body length	299	313	302	-	290
Tail length	108	120	112	110	104
Wing length	149	152	155	150	146
Bill length	49	47	47	41.5	42
Tarsus	51	50	47	44	45
Sex	♂	♂	♂	♀	♀
Region	Yutian	Moyo	Centre	Centre	Centre
Date	9.5.89	13.5.89	29.12.90	22.12.90	25.12.90

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Compiled by Joe Tobias and James C. Lowen

This feature aims to publicise papers and reports of interest to members. If anyone has written or knows of recent publications worthy of inclusion in this feature, please send details to the OBC for future bulletins.

REGIONAL

Assessing the status of poorly known species: lessons from partridges and pheasants of Southeast Asia *by P. McGowan (Ecoscope Applied Ecologists, 9 Bennell Court, Cambridge CB3 7DS) et al.* **Biological Conservation 83: 1-7.** Estimating changes in the available habitat within a species' range provides the best estimate of status.

CAMBODIA

A preliminary survey for the Bengal Florican in Cambodia *by J. C. Eames (BirdLife International Vietnam Programme, 293B Tay Son, Dong Da, Hanoi, Vietnam).* **Natural History Bulletin of the Siam Society 45: 99-106.** Anecdotal reports but no sightings in 1996 survey of historical range in eastern Cambodia.

CHINA

History of Red-crowned Crane *Grus japonensis* and its habitats in China *by Zhijun Ma (SKLEAC, Research Centre for Eco-environmental Studies, Chinese Academy of Sciences, P. O. Box 2871, Beijing, 100085, P.R.C.), Zijian Wang and Hongxiao Tang.* **Bird Conservation International 8: 1-10**. Changes in range and discussion of conservation.

The Sichuan Hill-partridge forest conservation project *by S. Dowell (Liverpool John Moores University, Byrom Street, Liverpool L3 3AF, UK).* **WPA News 54: 14-16.** Thirty-six records of *Arborophila rufipectus* during a seven weeks survey in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, including the first records for the latter.

Harman's Eared-pheasant in remote eastern Tibet *by Lu Xin (College of Life Science, Wu-Han University, Wu-Han 430072, China).* **WPA News 54: 29-33.** Geological and ecological factors are thought responsible for morphological variation between the subspecies of *Crossoptilon crossoptilon.*

INDIA

Breeding biology of the Great Pied Hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*) in the Anaimalai Hills of southern India *by R. Kannan and D. A. James (Dept Biological Sciences, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701, USA).* **J. Bombay Nat. Hist Soc. 94: 451-465.** Report of close observations of a Great Pied Hornbill nest in 1992 and 1993.

Blyth's Tragopan in the Blue Mountain National Park, Mizoram *by D. Ghose (no address).* **Game Bird and Conservationists' Gazette August 1997: 26-27.** Breeding data, habitat preferences and vocalisations of *Tragopan blythi.*

Distribution of Western Tragopan in Chamba District of Himachal Pradesh, India *by S. S. Katoch (Dept. of Biosciences, Himachal Pradesh Univ., Summer Hill, Shimala-171005, India) et al.* **Ann. Rev. WPA 1996/97: 33-39.** *Tragopan melanocephalus* found at several unprotected sites, but unrecorded in five wildlife sanctuaries.

INDONESIA

The birds of Sangihe and Talaud, North Sulawesi *by J. Riley (c/o 2 Archway Cottages, off Main Street, North Seahouses, Northumberland, NE68 7TZ).* **Kukila 9: 3-36**. 126 species recorded and conservation discussed.

Checklist of the birds of the Sula islands (1991), with particular reference to Taliabu island *by A. J. Stones (32 Hill Street, Norwich, Norfolk, NR2 2AE, UK), R. S. Lucking, P. J. Davidson and W. Raharjaningtrah.* **Kukila 9: 37-55**. 152 species recorded (47 new).

Rediscovery of Heinrich's Nightjar *Eurostopodus diabolicus* *by K. D. Bishop (P. O. Box 68, Kincumber, NSW 2251, Australia) and J. M. Diamond.* **Kukila 9: 71-73**. Several sightings in Lore Lindu National Park.

Birds of the Negara river basin, south Kalimantan, Indonesia *by S. van Balen (c/o BirdLife International – Indonesia Programme, P. O. Box 310, Bogor 16003).* **Kukila 9: 81-107**. Avian community and conservation discussed.

An overview of the distribution, status and behavioural ecology of the White-shouldered Ibis in East Kalimantan *by R. Sözer and A. van der Heijden.* **Kukila 9: 141-169**. 142 recent sightings.

Kalimantan bird report – 2 *by D. A. Holmes.* **Kukila 9: 141-169**. Records from the state between 1987 and 1997.

The Maleo *Macrocephalon maleo* on Buton *by D. M. Prawiradilaga (Balitbang Zoologi, P. O. Box 230, Bogor 16004, Indonesia).* **Bull. Brit. Orn. Club 117: 237**. Nesting confirmed on the island.

The conservation status of the restricted-range lowland birds of Buru, Indonesia *by S. J. Marsden (Conservation Research Group, Department of Biological Sciences, Manchester Metropolitan University, Chester Street, Manchester, M1 5GD, UK) et al.* **Bird Conservation International 7: 213-233.** The immediate future of the majority of Buru's lowland avifauna appears secure.

Biological surveys and conservation priorities on the Sangihe and Talaud islands, Indonesia *by J. Riley (1 The Croft, North Sunderland, Seahouses NE68 7XA, UK).* Assertion of taxonomic validity of Sangihe Shrike-thrush *Colluricincla (megaryhncha) sanghirensis*, and status assessment of Red-and-blue Lory *Eos histrio*. (CSB Conservation Publications, ISBN 1 901399 03 6).

A first record of Yellow-browed Warbler for Borneo *by M. Hale (Hong Kong Birdwatching Society, GPO Box 12460, Hong Kong).* **Malayan Nature Journal 50: 195-196.** *Phylloscopus i. inornatus* recorded in Kuching, Sarawak in January 1996.

Impact of logging and plantation development on species diversity: a case study from Sumatra *by F. Danielsen (NORDECO, Skindergade 23, DK-1159 Copenhagen, Denmark).* **Pp 73-92 in Ø. Sandbukt, ed., Management of tropical forests: towards an integrated perspective.** Primary forest logged or converted to plantations led to species-poor and less diverse bird communities with fewer species of conservation importance. (Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo).

KOREA

Current status of wintering cranes in Korea *by Seong-Hwan Pae (Korea Institute of Ornithology, Kyung Hee University, Seoul 130-701, Republic of Korea), F. Kaliher, Jae-Bum Lee, Pyong-Oh Won and Jeong-Chil Yoo.* **The Bulletin of Korean Institute of Ornithology 5: 13-20.** Records of *Grus grus, G. vipio, G. japonensis, G. monacha, G. canadensis* and *G. leucogeranus* between 1992 and 1996 in the Cholwon basin and the Han river estuary.

Checklist of the birds of Korea *by Pyong-Oh Won (Korea Institute of Ornithology, Kyung-Hee University, Seoul 130-701, Republic of Korea).* **The Bulletin of Korean Institute of Ornithology 5: 39-58.** Full checklist of 418 species.

Wintering ecology of the Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* and carrying capacity of their habitats *by Heui-Young Kang (Department of Biology, Kongju National University, Seoul, Republic of Korea).* **The Korean Journal of Ornithology 3: 33-41.** Wintering ecology of around 60,000 individuals on paddy-fields around Chonsu bay between 1994 and 1996.

LAOS

Bird and mammal records from the Sangthong district, Vientiane municipality, Laos in 1996 *by J. W. Duckworth (East Redham Farm, Pilning, Bristol, BS12 3JG, UK).* **Nat. Hist. Bull. Siam Soc. 44: 217-242**. Seventeen globally or nationally threatened species of birds and ten of mammals.

Observations on a population of Jerdon's Bushchats *Saxicola jerdoni* in the Mekong Channel, Laos *by J. W. Duckworth (see above).* **Bull. Brit. Orn. Club 117: 210-220**. Population of 100-200 pairs discovered and studied.

MALAYSIA

A report on the night birds listed for Malaysia in the Asian bird Red Data Book *by D. Yong (Kingfisher Tours Sdn Bhd, Suite 1107, 11th floor Bangunan Yayasan Selangor, Jln Bukit Bintang, 55100 K. Lumpur, Malaysia).* **Suara Enggang September-October 1997: 17-25.** Summary of the status and distribution of *Otus sagittatus, Bubo coromandus, Batrachostomus auritus, B. harterti, B. mixtus* and *Caprimulgus concretus.*

New birds and bats from Pulau Tioman, Malaysia *by G. Csorba (Dept. of Zoology, Hungarian Natural History Museum, H-1088 Budapest, Baross u. 13, Hungary) et al.* **Malayan Nature Journal 50: 197-200.** *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus, Calidris temmincki* and *Halcyon smyrnensis* new for the island in March 1995.

NEPAL

Bristled Grassbirds *Chaetornis striatus* in Nepal *by H. S. Baral (BCN, P. O. Box 12465, Kamaladi, Kathmandu, Nepal).* **Danphe 6: 5-6.** Declining; recent records discussed.

VIETNAM

The status and conservation of threatened and near-threatened species of birds in the Red River delta, Vietnam *by A. Pedersen (Zoological Museum, University of Copenhagen, Universitetsparken 15, DK-2100, Copenhagen Ø, Denmark) et al.* **Bird Conservation International 8: 31-51.** Six threatened and five near-threatened species discussed and conservation measures proposed.

The rediscovery of Edwards's Pheasant *by R. Eve (68 rue Vitry, 93100 Montreuil, France).* **Ann. Rev. WPA 1996/97: 40-42.** Rediscovery of *Lophura edwardsi* confirmed in Thua Thien Huê and Quang Tri provinces during August 1996.

From the Field

Compiled by Craig Robson

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

These are largely unconfirmed records covering the period from January 1997-February 1998. We urge that if they have not already done so, contributors provide full details to the relevant regional organisations in due course.

CAMBODIA

Another batch of new records for the country has been received (FG): Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus* at various sites in Ratanakiri Province between January and summer 1997, a small party of Pompadour Green Pigeons *Treron pompadoura* at Sambor Prey Kuk temples, Kompong Thom in August (one had previously been seen by the same observer in Taveng District, Ratanakiri in November 1996), an Oriental Hobby *Falco severus* by the Sesan River, between Vun Say and Taveng in June and a Great Tit *Parus major* in Lumphat District, Ratanakiri in July. Other new sightings made by the same observer but outside the current period under review were Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* during a boat trip from Koh Kong to Sre Ambel in June 1996, a single Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* in Oyadao District, east of Ratanakiri in December 1996 and a small party of Black-throated Laughingthrushes *Garrulax chinensis* near Banlung, on the path to Yak Lom Lake, Ratanakiri in April 1996. Also of great interest in Ratanakiri Province (FG) were sightings of White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis,* with two over the Lumphat Road in January 1997, one in Oyadao District in June and a total of 26 (in groups of up to 12) in Lumphat District during June-July. Four Red-headed Vultures *Sarcogyps calvus* were also seen in Lumphat District during June-July.

CHINA

A survey from 1st April-27th May (RM,DB, SD,RW), recorded at least 37 Sichuan Partridges *Arborophila rufipectus* at five forest tracts in south-central Sichuan (E'bian/Mabian/Muchuan/ Pingshan/Leibo Counties) and another site in north-east Yunnan (Suijiang/Yongshan Counties), between 1,300-2,235 m elevation; the Yunnan records appear to be the first. The same observers found a number of other interesting species in south-central Sichuan, including a Black-tailed Crake *Porzana bicolor* at Erbagou (Leibo County) on 14th and 19th May, where a nest containing one egg (presumed to belong to this species) was found on the latter date, a single Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* between Dayandong and Leibo on 30th April (presumably a migrant), up to seven White-winged Magpies *Urocissa whiteheadi* on three dates at Yangsiba (Mabian/Leibo Counties), during 21st-29th April and up to four per day at Erbagou on 13th-14th May, a male Grey-winged Blackbird *Turdus boulboul* singing at Ledugou (Leibo County) on 17th May and White-browed Fulvetta *Alcippe vinipectus* at Huanglian Shan on 14th April. At sites visited in north-east Yunnan, they found a single Wood Snipe *Gallinago nemoricola* at Haozhiba (Yongshan/Daguan Counties) on 2nd May, Emei Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus emeiensis* at Ershisigeng (Yongshan/Suijiang Counties) on 6th-7th May and Daxuecao (Yongshan/Daguan/Yanjin Counties) on 4th May and Emei Shan Liocichla *Liocichla omeiensis* at Daxuecao on 4th May, probably the first Yunnan records of both, and Giant Laughingthrush *Garrulax maximus* and White-browed Fulvetta at Haozhiba on 2nd-3rd May. Russet Bush Warbler *Bradypterus seebohmi* was heard singing at a minimum of 16 sites in south-central Sichuan and north-east Yunnan during 15th April-27th May. Six Scaly-sided Mergansers *Mergus squamatus* were reported from Lashi Hai Lake (Lijiang County), north-west Yunnan on 2nd March (YL,YX) and more surprisingly, eight Saunders's Gulls *Larus saundersi* were reported from Lugu Hu, in neighbouring Ninglang County on 5th-6th March (YL,YX). A calling Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* was watched above Long Lake, Jiuzhaigou Panda Reserve, north Sichuan on 9th June (RT,RM,DW,RW) and an adult and juvenile Purple Cochoa *Cochoa purpurea* at Wuyipeng, Wolong Panda Reserve, west Sichuan in late July were also unusual.

Xizang and Qinghai Provinces (Tibet)

Some interesting sightings were made at Meng Da Forest, south-east Qinghai during 2nd-4th September (PH,JH), including 14 Blue Eared Pheasants *Crossoptilon auritum*, 19 Chinese Grouse *Tetrastes sewerzowi* and three Speckled Wood Pigeons *Columba hodgsonii*. The same observers counted no less than 77 Tibetan Rosefinches *Carpodacus roborowskii* at the Er La Passes on 28th-30th August, including large family parties. At Qinghai Hu, Qinghai there was a single Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* on 5th August (RT,RM) and more surprisingly, a Yellow-billed Grosbeak *Eophona migratoria* on 18th July (RT,RM), believed to be a migrant. Near Kanda Shan, *c.* 25 km north of Nangqian, south Qinghai on 28th July, a pair of Tibetan Buntings *Emberiza koslowi* were seen carrying food to a nest containing three young (RT,RM), the first breeding record for the species. A further pair and three singing males was seen nearby. A total of five White-collared Blackbirds *Turdus albocinctus*, paired and with males singing, were seen north of Samye Monastery, near Lhasa, Xizang on 10th-12th July (RT,RM).

INDIA

At Harike Bird Sanctuary, Punjab (PU), winter rarities included four Long-eared Owls *Asio otus* on 7th February 1998, a single Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler *Cettia fortipes* from 1st November-8th February 1998, a single Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* on 1st-2nd November and a Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* on 1st November. During last summer, two Bristled Grassbirds *Chaetornis striatus* were observed from 3rd-9th August. At Okhla Island, Delhi there were four White-winged Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* on 25th August (PU). A White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurensis phoenicurus* at Rampura near Ghandhi Sagar reservoir, Madhya Pradesh on 10th February (RK) was an interesting record in this semi-arid region. Also at this locality on the 18th February were 9 Sarus Cranes *Grus antigone* (RK).

INDONESIA

Banggai Archipelago

During 4th-5th November Bangkurung Island, the southernmost of the four main islands, was visited (MI). The avifauna of the island appears to be undocumented, at least in the last 50 years, so all of the following records may be new: Sula Scrubfowl *Megapodius bernsteinii* at Dongkeyan (reported by villagers), a single Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* at Kalopapi, Moluccan Hanging Parrot *Loriculus amabilis ruber*, Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta* and Grey-rumped Treeswift *Hemiprocne longipennis* all at Dongkeyan and Kalopapi, two Great Eared Nightjars *Eurostopodus macrotis* and a single Black-naped Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus melanospila* at Dongkeyan, two Brahminy Kites *Haliastur indus* and a White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* at Kalopapi, a single Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos* an Elegant Pitta *Pitta elegans* and two Black-naped Orioles *Oriolus chinensis* all at Dongkeyan, and two Island Monarchs *Monarcha cinerascens* (exhibiting rufous-ochraceous breast as well as belly), several Black-crowned White-eyes *Zosterops atrifrons sulana*, Grey-sided Flowerpecker *Dicaeum celebicum*, Brown-throated Sunbird *Anthreptes malacensis*, Black Sunbird *Nectarinia aspasia* and Olive-backed Sunbird *N. jugularis* all at both Dongkeyan and Kalopapi.

Riau Archipelago

Two new species have been recorded for the islands, two Red-wattled Lapwings *Vanellus indicus* at a reservoir at Pulau Bintan north and two Parasitic Jaegers *Stercorarius parasiticus* in Indonesian waters off Pulau Batam, both on 4th December (SR). A Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* at a reservoir in northern Pulau Bintan on the same date (SR) was the first recorded from this island.

Sulawesi

A flock of 51 Milky Storks *Mycteria cinerea* was found *c.* 15 km east of Marisa, North Sulawesi Province in December (KDB); the species is very rare in the north. Also of interest were records of Comb-crested Jacana *Irediparra gallinacea*, with *c.* 20, about 15 km east of Marisa on 3rd December (KDB) and six adults and two dependant young at Lake Limbotto, near Gorontalo on 3rd December (KDB); the first from North Sulawesi Province. Small numbers of Asian Palm Swifts *Cypsiurus balasiensis* between Palu and Gorontalo, North Sulawesi in December (KDB), constituted a notable range extension as did two Sooty-headed Bulbuls *Pycnonotus aurigaster* (a probable introduction) *c.* 15 km north-east of Amurong, Near Manado, North Sulawesi, also in December (KDB). 10,000-12,000 Whiskered Terns *Chlidonias hybridus* at Lake Limbotto on 3rd December (KDB) was an exceptionally large concentration.

Sumatra

Additional records that should have appeared in the last bulletin were a single Dusky Woodcock *Scolopax saturata* on Gunung Dempo (*c.* 2,000 m elevation) on 27th July (FV), where another dead bird was produced by a local hunter and a single Gould's Frogmouth *Batrachostomus stellatus* heard and seen near Muara Imat, half way between Sungai Penuh and Bangko, Jambi Province on 25th August (FV). Also, Salvadori's Pheasants *Lophura inornata* were seen at Gunung Tujuh (900 m elevation), Jambi and near Tandai, West Sumatra, both within Kerinchi-Seblat National Park, during 1996 (JHo); a pair was photographed with two chicks at the former locality.

LAOS

At least six individuals of a recently discovered barwing *Actinodura* (see Vietnam section in From the Field, Bulletin 25) were observed in mixed tall grass and scrub abutting pine woodland at 1,140 m on the Dakchung Plateau, Dakchung District, Xe Kong Province, east S Laos, in December (PD,DS). Two other new records for S Laos were a flock of at least 20 Striated Yuhinas *Yuhina castaniceps c.* 2 km north-west of Ban Xi, Kaleum District, Xe Kong on 2nd December (PD *et al.*) and several Fork-tailed Sunbirds *Aethopyga christinae* on the Dakchung Plateau on 14th-16th December (PD *et al.*). Two species were confirmed for S Laos, a female Hodgson's Frogmouth *Batrachostomus hodgsoni* and at least two Yellow-billed Nuthatches *Sitta solangiae* (the latter at only 1,160-1,180 m elevation) just west of Ban Tong Phen, Dakchung Plateau on 15th-16th December (PD *et al.*). Also of interest were at least five Green-tailed Sunbirds *A. nipalensis* on the Dakchung Plateau on 14th-16th December (PD *et al.*). In the north, at least two Oriental Skylarks *Alauda gulgula* in song flight, just north-east of Ban Sivilai, Vientiane Prefecture (*c.* 60 km north of Vientiane) on 20th December (PD *et al.*) were, surprisingly, the first definite records for Laos. 15 Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* flying over the Mekong and Vientiane from NE Thailand on 25th December (PD,DS) were also noteworthy.

MALAYSIA

Peninsular Malaysia

A Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* was found in mangroves at Kukup Forest Reserve, Johor on 23rd December (SR).

Sabah

Surprises here were a Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* on the Segama River at Borneo Rainforest Lodge, Danum Valley on 21st October (ND), an Oriental Hobby *Falco severus* on Pulau Tiga on 22nd October (AA) and three Black-headed Buntings *Emberiza melanocephala* (together), also on Pulau Tiga on 22nd-23rd October (ND/Naturetrek); quite remarkable considering that the first record for Borneo came from the same locality in 1996!

MYANMAR (BURMA)

News was received of observations of Snowy-throated Babbler *Stachyris oglei* in Kachin State during February 1998 (BKi *et al.*), an important addition to the country's avifauna and a welcome extension of the species' small range. The same observers also saw Goldcest *Regulus regulus*, a new record for N Burma.

NEPAL

Interesting sightings included a Spot-bellied Eagle Owl *Bubo nipalensis* near Silent Safari, Sukila Phanta Wildlife Reserve on 12th March (TG,JP) and at least two Bristled Grassbirds *Chaetornis striatus* in grassland near Hokke Hotel, Lumbini, Rupandehi District on 31st August (HC).

SINGAPORE

There have been three more additions to the Singapore list, a juvenile Little Curlew *Numenius minutus* seen and photographed on the greens at the Raffles Country Club, Tuas on 25th October (CB) and present until 2nd November (LKK,OKS), a first-winter male Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides glaucicomans* at Sungei Buloh Nature Park on 18th November (AC,LKS) and at least 20 House Sparrows *Passer domesticus,* including juveniles and adults attending nests, at a warehouse in Pasir Panjang in September (DT,KK,LKC,LKS); the latter are believed to have been ship-assisted arrivals. A Maroon Woodpecker *Blythipicus rubiginosus* was reported from Sime Forest on 11th January 1998 (WP,GTS) and, if confirmed, would be the first record this century. The Barred Eagle Owl *Bubo sumatranus* first discovered at Bukit Timah Nature Reserve in October 1996 was heard until at least 4th July (SR) and another (or the same bird ?) was seen at Nee Soon on 28th January 1998 (AT,JL), the first records since 1927. A male Cinnamon-headed Green Pigeon *Treron fulvicollis* at Bukit Kalang on 19th October (CPW,LKS) was the first record from the central forests, while a Black Magpie *Platysmurus leucopterus,* heard at MacRitchie North on 5th January 1998 (SR), has been present since 1993 and may be a genuine arrival from Johor, Peninsular Malaysia. The female Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis,* first recorded in July 1996 was seen again at Bukit Timah NR on 22nd October (SR) and 4th January 1998 (LKS). An Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus leucogenis* at Bukit Batok Nature Park on 12th November (SR,SS) was a new subspecies record for Singapore. Other rarities during the period under review included a Red Knot *Calidris canutus* at Sungei Buloh on 23rd-29th November (AC,LKC,LKK,LKS,AO), the fourth record, three Red-wattled Lapwings *Vanellus indicus* at Poyan Reservoir on 27th June (SR), five Aleutian Terns *Sterna aleutica* off Tanah Merah, close to International waters on 4th December (SR), a single Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* at Serangoon Estuary on 15th October (SR,EH,SS), an immature Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela* at Pulau Ubin on 19th October (SR,EH,SW) and an adult over Sime Road on 7th December and Sime Forest on 29th December (SR), two Shikras *Accipiter badius* in Singapore Botanic Gardens on 6th November (SR), a single Besra *A. virgatus* at Mount Faber on 18th December (SR), a single Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* migrating over Kent Ridge Park on 2nd November (SR), a Blue-winged Pitta *Pitta moluccensis* in Singapore Botanic Gardens on 6th November (SR), a female Lesser Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina fimbriata* at Bukit Timah NR on 4th January 1998 (LKS), the first record for 11 years, a male Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina* at Bukit Timah NR on 30th December (SR) and a single Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* at Sentosa on 29th November (SR). There was a notable influx of Brown-chested Jungle Flycatchers *Rhinomyias brunneata* in October, with singles at Sentosa on 16th (SR), Holland Woods on 18th (SR), Tyersall Woods on 18th (SR) to 31st (SG,LKS), Mount Faber on 26th (SR) and Tuas on 30th (AC,KK,LKS,AO,YPL), three at Bukit Timah NR on 22nd (SR), three at Mandai Forest on 30th (SR) and two at Nee Soon on 31st (SR). There was also a good showing of Yellow-vented Flowerpeckers *Dicaeum chrysorrheum* with one at Bukit Timah NR on 25th December (AC,KK,LKS,AO,YPL), three there on 4th January 1998 (LKS) and two more at Sime Forest on 11th January 1998 (WP,PP), the first records of this rare resident for seven years! A flock of five Oriental Pied Hornbills *Anthracoceros albirostris,* including two juveniles on Pulau Ubin on 19th June (SR), was the largest flock recorded in Singapore this century and indicative of successful breeding by the original pair discovered there. 16 Ashy Bulbuls *Hemixos flavala* at Mount Imbiah, Sentosa on 16th October (SR) was an impressive total for this winter visitor.

SRI LANKA

Two interesting reports were received: a single Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* was at Bundala Salt Works on 22nd February 1998 (RTh,ST,BF), whilst the same observers noted a probable Pale Martin *Riparia diluta* at Kalametiya on 26th February.

THAILAND

An immature River Tern *Sterna aurantia* seen at Bung Boraphet, Nakhon Sawan on 22nd June (BCST) was only the second record from C Thailand and there were also two Spot-billed Pelicans *Pelecanus philippensis* there on 8th July (BK). Two Jungle Mynas *Acridotheres fuscus* at Ban Prok, Samut Songkhram on 6th September (AK), constitute a northward range extension to coastal C Thailand. Also of interest was a Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* at Hat Vanakorn, Prachuap Khiri Khan on 13th September (WS), a Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* at Ban Kalong, Samut Sakhon also on 13th September (SSu) and three House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* at Thaton, Chiang Mai on 31st December (AM). An Eastern Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus* at Mae Wong National Park, Nakhon Sawan on 9th August (WS) was the earliest ever reported, as was a Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* at Namtok Huai Yang, Prachuap on 2nd July (PE).

VIETNAM

Eight bullfinches of a previously undescribed taxon were observed and tape-recorded on Mount Lang Bian, Lam Dong, S Annam on 11th February 1998 (CR/Birdquest). Probable Brown Bullfinches *Pyrrhula nipalensis* were reported from this locality in *c.* 1992 (UO,PA), but with their largely whitish heads (apart from throat), the birds here are clearly a very distinctive subspecies, if not a distinct species. A Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* in Cat Tien National Park, Dong Nai on 15th February 1998 (CR/Birdquest) was apparently the first record from Cochinchina. Studies in Vu Quang Nature Reserve during July-September (MK,LK *et al.*) resulted in the discovery of 17 new species for N Annam; two Rufous-throated Partridges *Arborophila rufogularis*, a single Red-headed Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus* on 5th September, five White-gorgeted Flycatchers *Ficedula monileger*, a single Purple-backed Starling *Sturnus sturninus* on 11th September, Yellow-cheeked Tit *Parus spilonotus* (common), Black-throated Tit *Aegithalos concinnus* (common), Slaty-bellied Tesia *Tesia olivea* (common), a single Rusty-rumped Warbler *Locustella certhiola* on 8th September, a single Mountain Tailorbird *Orthotomus cucullatus*, a Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaniceps*, several Rufous-faced Warblers *Abroscopus albogularis*, a single Red-billed Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ochraceiceps*, Pygmy Wren Babbler *Pnoepyga pusilla* (scarce), Rufous-winged Fulvetta *Alcippe castaneceps* (common), Black-chinned Yuhina *Yuhina nigrimenta* (scarce), a single Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile* and Gould's Sunbird *Aethopyga gouldiae* (occasional). Further north, in W Tonkin, a single Wood Snipe *Gallinago nemoricola* near Sa Pa on 21st October (JE,FL) was a very welcome recent record and observations of raptor migration over Lo Qui Ho Pass, near Sa Pa (JE,FL) produced 240 Amur Falcons *Falco amurensis* on 19th October and six Greater Spotted Eagles *Aquila clanga* on 24th October (JE,FL). In Hanoi, on 26th October (JE), another Greater Spotted Eagle was seen passing over in company with Oriental Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhyncus* and Grey-faced Buzzard *Butastur indicus*.

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Recently published

Birding Indonesia - A Bird-watcher's Guide to the World's Largest Archipelago. *By Paul Jepson. Periplus Editions, 1997. 318 pp. £11.95. ISBN 962-593-071-X*

Indonesia is a vast archipelago spanning two zoogeographical zones and offering the visiting birder a potentially long list of endemics. Anyone planning a trip to the country will appreciate the difficulty of collating all the information required to maximise its potential, a task admirably achieved by Paul Jepson in this, the first birding guide to the whole country.

The guide is divided into two sections of almost equal size; the first consists of an overview of the avifauna of the archipelago, a brief ornithological history and bird conservation within the country. Following this is an introduction to each region including a map, and a series of vignettes describing a selection of its most appealing sites, attractively written by a variety of authors, all of whom have an intimate knowledge of the area concerned. These site descriptions are intermixed with an informative series of features on various aspects of Indonesian ornithology such as seabird movements, hornbills, birds-of-paradise, *etc*. It is enhanced by a selection of well-chosen photographs that not only show several of the more stunning bird species, but also ethnic shots of native people, habitats and, unusually, birders in action.

The second section is packed with invaluable information; it begins with a detailed travel advisory describing the practicalities of visiting Indonesia such as details on visas, travel, health and food as well as sections on planning an itinerary, birding tips and an innovative 'Indonesian for birders' language section. A region by region guide then follows with information on access, accommodation, key species and other wildlife for most of the main sites on each island or island group. This allows the reader inspired by any of the accounts in the first section to rapidly cross-reference, a very useful aid in trip planning. Another welcome feature is the inclusion of the logistics of visiting some areas about which little is known ornithologically, with the aim of encouraging birders to do some exploration of potentially interesting areas.

The book is rounded off with several appendices including a full checklist which is coded for range, but unfortunately fails to distinguish between species endemic to Borneo and those endemic to the Greater Sundas. I feel that the nomenclature used, based on *The Birds of Indonesia: a Checklist (Peters' sequence)* (Andrew 1992), has resulted in some unfamiliar names that are not always adhered to in the text. I particularly dislike the use of 'Jeffery' for *Chlamydochaera jefferyi*.

The main body of text seems to be relatively free from mistakes. However, the picture captions appear not to have been checked prior to printing which has resulted in unfortunate errors such as Magnificent Riflebird being mislabelled as 'King Bird-of-paradise', Wreathed Hornbills as 'Weather Hornbills' and Black-banded Flycatcher as 'Orange-banded Flycatcher'.

Putting these few niggles aside I found the book attractive and pleasing to use. It is very informative and would no doubt be a valuable asset in planning a trip to this fascinating and bird rich nation. With a price tag of only £11.95 what more can I say other than buy it!

Brian Gee

Warblers of Europe, Asia and North Africa. *By Kevin Baker. A & C Black, London, 1997. 48 plates, 400 pp. £29.95. ISBN 0-7136-3971-7.*

I had assumed when I heard that a book about warblers was to appear in the Helm Identification Guide series that it would cover all the Old World warblers, since a previous volume in the series had already covered the New World species (albeit a different family of warblers). The title of this book was therefore the first disappointment as it led to the correct conclusion that a number of warblers were excluded. Yet some of those excluded species are the most challenging to identify and the least well-known. Surely the book could have covered several closely related genera and excluded others, a much more logical selective process than using the geographical area chosen. This would have led the way for a sister volume to cover the excluded genera. However, it seems unlikely that a sister volume covering the warblers of sub-Saharan Africa will ever be published, not to mention the few missing southern Asian species.

The selection of the geographical area covered has inevitably led to some anomalies; for example, Goldcrest and Firecrest are covered in detail, but the kinglets and Taiwan Firecrest are not. Incongruously Ruby-crowned Kinglet is mentioned under confusion species for Goldcrest, but Golden-crowned Kinglet is not mentioned under Firecrest. In the ever changing mire that is avian systematics the author has made a creditable attempt to keep the reader informed about the various ways in which taxa might be treated. However, although *teneriffae* is mentioned as sometimes being regarded as a subspecies of Firecrest it is not mentioned as sometimes being accorded specific status - this I assume is an oversight, rather than deliberate, since specific status has long been proposed for this taxon.

The plates in particular have attracted comment from a lot of people, including myself. A book of this type takes an immense amount of research and effort and the author is to be commended for that. While the text is generally of a high standard, it is the plates that let the book down. We have perhaps been spoilt by seeing the standard of bird illustrations raised to previously unimaginable heights and it is not so long ago that we would have applauded the level of detail depicted in this book's plates. However, that is not the case now. In today's world of critical analysis of a bird's structure and plumage, some aspects of the illustrations are difficult to reconcile. The primary projections of the Spectacled and Moustached Warblers are excessive to say the least and fail to match the text and indeed the line drawings. The same comment could be made about the illustrations of Sardinian Warbler and many other species that I am familiar with. These disparities are possibly understandable when the author and artist are different people, but extremely disappointing when the author and artist are the same person. Doubtless it does not matter that some of the illustrations are not to the highest standard, but some groups of birds, for example *Hippolais* and *Acrocephalus* warblers, require precise illustrations to be a useful accompaniment. As with the *Sylvia* warblers there are inconsistencies in the primary projection and the number of visible primary tips on the Upcher's and Olive-tree Warblers between the plates, text and line drawings. There are similar problems for Blyth's Reed Warbler and some of the other *Acrocephalus* warblers. From my own previous experience I quickly realised that in such cases the text was invariably correct, rather than the illustrations, but the inconsistencies would certainly confuse someone not familiar with the species in question. So am I able to trust the species that I am not familiar with? After all it is usually the unfamiliar species that the reader most wants to learn about. In addition to inaccuracies in the artwork, the artist's technique is also patchy in places - the Hume's Leaf Warbler is one of several disappointments.

As with any book of this type and size a few mistakes/oversights, such as maps the wrong colour, are inevitable but I will not dwell upon them here. While a tremendous amount of effort has gone into this book and a number of species are described and illustrated to a higher standard than ever before, I am afraid that in my opinion this book is a missed opportunity; the exclusion of more than half the species in the family and some poor artwork made this book a disappointment for me.

Roy Hargreaves

Pticy V'etnama. Po issledovanijam 1978-1990 godov. [The birds of Vietnam. Based on research in 1978-1990.] by L. S. Stepanjan. Nauka, Moskva, 1995. 448 pages. ISBN 5-02-004763-5 [in Russian].

In 1978-1990, animal life in the forests of Vietnam was studied by Soviet (later Russian) and Vietnamese zoologists in the frame of an international joint project. Most of the ornithological research was done in the vicinity of Buon Luoi field station in Central Annam by Russian ornithologist Leo Surenovic Stepanjan. During 11 expeditions, he spent 582 days in Vietnam, most of them (318) in the field. The expeditions covered all months except August.

Starting in 1984, Stepanjan published a series of short papers on the birds of Vietnam (22 are cited in his book), which culminated in a voluminous summary. In spite of its main title, the book is a (multi)expedition report, not a review of the avifauna of Vietnam.

The introductory part of the book focuses on the description of habitat and climate of the Buon Luoi region. Welcome is an explanatory list of geographical names used in the book. Unfortunately, it does not include the original (Viet) spellings, which will cause trouble to those trying to work back from Russian spellings to Latin ones. There is no way unambiguously to transliterate the Latin alphabet into the Cyrillic ('Russian') one, and the transcription applied does not allow exact reconstruction of the original spelling.

The second part of the book is devoted to selected ecological generalizations. Valuable are data on the phenology of reproduction, summarized in tables. At Buon Luoi, most of the birds lay their eggs in March through May. A possible exception to this schedule is *Pomatorhinus hypoleucos*. Its recently fledged young were recorded on 2nd January, while a female collected on 9th May was sexually inactive. Ornithologists planning to visit South-East Asia will also find useful data on layers used by forest birds at Buon Luoy. Special attention is given to the composition of mixed flocks of forest birds.

The main part of the book contains a systematic list of bird species observed by Stepanjan in Vietnam. Included are also original data on specimens from the National Center of Scientific Research in Ha Noi, and on specimens collected in Vietnam by Russian zoologists V. A. Ostapenko and M. V. Kaljakin. The list follows the Wetmorean classification. Most of the species are consecutively numbered, but this does not apply to species seen by Stepanjan only outside of the Tay Nguyen Plateau. Eight species only observed whilst travelling and some species recorded by other researchers at places not visited by Stepanjan are separated in an appendix. Species recorded from the Tay Nguyen Plateau previously, but not seen by Stepanjan, are not included at all.

Stepanjan is an enthusiastic and experienced alpha-taxonomist. Accordingly, most of the text considers subspecific status of collected and/or observed birds. No new taxa were described however. Species accounts include a list of collected specimens. The following data are given for each specimen: date and place of collection, museum where the specimen is deposited, lengths of wing, tail, bill and tarsus, and body mass. Occasionally data on moult and stomach contents are given.

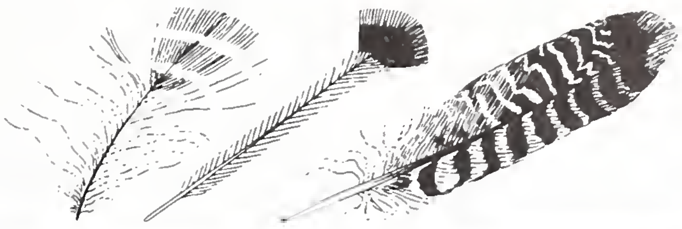
Less attention is given to faunistic and life-history data. The last faunistic publication of a non-Russian author is *King's Field-guide to the birds of South-East Asia* from 1975. Recent observations by OBC members remain totally unconsidered.

The book is furnished with a bibliography, alphabetical list of scientific names of species, genera, families and orders of birds mentioned in the text. Unfortunately, pages for genera are given only if species names are not associated with them in the text. Hence, it is impossible to locate say *Prinia*, unless you know the name of at least one of its species included in the book. The book finishes by Stepanjan's selected bibliography, which starts with a paper on the birds of the Caucasus from 1954. There are neither photographs, nor drawings in the book.

In summary, Stepanjan's *'Birds of Vietnam'* contains numerous, highly valuable original data on the birds of this ornithologically still little-known country. A big disadvantage is that the book was published in Russian, a language which is probably unknown to most ornithologists interested in the birds of South-East Asia. Despite this, Stepanjan's observations must be considered in any faunistic paper on the birds of Vietnam.

Jiri Mlíkovský

Stray Feathers



Records of Sociable Lapwing from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka wanted

It is now well established that a dramatic decline of the Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* has taken place on their breeding grounds in Russia and Kazakhstan and it has therefore been listed as globally threatened by Collar *et al.* (1994). To establish its past and present status in the Indian subcontinent, all records, old as well as recent, are requested. Information required is the number of birds, date(s), location (as detailed as possible) and a description of the habitat the birds were found in. All contributions will be acknowledged on publication. Please send records to: Per Undeland, Nestle India Ltd, DLF Centre, Sansad Marg, New Delhi 110 001, India or to Harkirat S. Sangha, B-27 Gautam Marg, Hanuman Nagar, Jaipur 302021, India.

New methods for distributing Kukila

From volume 10 of next year, *Kukila*, the Bulletin of the Indonesian Ornithological Society, will be available through selected retail outlets who have agreed to undertake sales and promotion. This is to lessen the work load of dealing with personal subscriptions, although these can still be accepted from customers who would have especial difficulty in obtaining their copies from selected outlets. *Kukila* will still be available from P. O. Box 310, Bogor 16003, Tel./Fax +62 0251 333234; the retailer for Europe will be the NHBS Mailorder Bookstore, 2-3 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon, Tel. +44 (0) 1803 865913; Fax +44 (0) 1803 865280; E-mail: nhbs@nhbs.co.uk; other retailers will be announced in due course.

World Hornbill News

Until recently, several newsletters focusing on hornbills Bucerotidae were published around the world. In Asia there was the newsletter of the Asian Hornbill Network, published by Pilai Poonswad and her team, in Europe we had the EEP Hornbill TAG Newsletter, published by the EEP Hornbill TAG and finally there was also the BirdLife International Hornbill Specialist Group Newsletter. At the International Hornbill Workshop held in Malaga, Spain in March 1997 it was decided to join all efforts and publish a world-wide newsletter. This newsletter, called World Hornbill News, will deal with hornbill issues both in the wild as well as in captivity, and will thus be of interest to everyone interested in these magnificent birds. Features will include overviews of captive breeding results, breeding reports of field research, recently published hornbill literature and much more.

There will be a group of editors, each responsible for collecting information from his/her respective region. These are: Pilai Poonswad for Asia, Alan Kemp for Africa, Christine Sheppard and Wendy Worth for North America, Koen Brouwer and Bart Hiddinga for Europe. They will take it in turns to edit the World Hornbill News and for the first issue this responsibility falls to Koen Brouwer and Bart Hiddinga. World Hornbill News is scheduled to come out once a year.

Photographs of South-East Asian birds wanted

For his ongoing documentation of Asian bird life, Morten Strange is looking for new photographs of South-East Asian birds. All material is of interest but especially photographs of unusual and endemic residents from the region. Even if you have just a few species, they may be useful; please contact Morten Strange, Flying Colours Photography, Engskovvej 50, 8541 Skodstrup, Denmark. Fax 45-8699 3886.

Maleo nesting ground details wanted

Gillian Baker of the Maleo Survey and Education Project is looking for records of Maleo nesting grounds in Sulawesi. If you are working or travelling around Sulawesi and have the opportunity to visit a nesting ground, she would be grateful if you could contact her and fill in a simple questionnaire about the site. Particularly required is information about the number of birds at each site, but even just the location of a nesting ground will be useful. Please contact Gillian at the following address: School of Biological Sciences, University of Sussex, BN1 9QG, UK. Fax: +44 (0) 1273 678433; email: bdu00@central.sussex.ac.uk

Recordings of Red Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* from Asia wanted

Magnus Robb is currently studying the variation in Red Crossbill calls across Eurasia. He is interested in recordings of the following three isolated subspecies in the Oriental Region: *himalayensis* (Himalayas through Eastern Tibet to Kansu), *meridonalis* (southern Annam, Vietnam) and *luzoniensis* (Luzon, Philippines). Please send details of any recordings to the OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK. Alternatively contact Magnus directly by email at the following address: m.s.robb@wxs.nl

Information wanted for a forthcoming monograph on the Yuhinas

The centre for the study of tropical ornithology, Gesellschaft für Tropenornithologie (GTO) is looking for information about species in the following east Asian genera:*Yuhina*, *Staphida* and *Erpornis*. They are looking for information on all aspects of their breeding biology, ecology, flocking behaviour, distribution *etc*. Also of interest is information on plumage, appearance and morphology and reference material.

Other workers in the area are welcome to contact the GTO and all records, even if single observations, should be sent to the following address: Robert Pfeifer, Dilchertstrasse 8, D-53501 Grafschaft, Germany. Tel/fax +49(0) 2641 201752

Nature Shop at Thekkady

Please note that Girish, the owner of the 'Eco-shop' at Periyar (*Bull OBC* 25: 55) has now moved to the Nature Shop, opposite the Hotel Ambadi on the main road through Thekkady.

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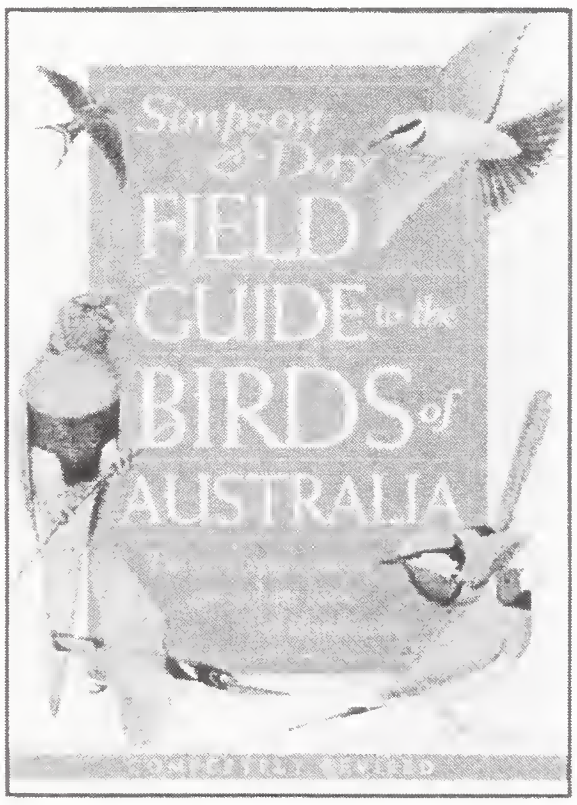

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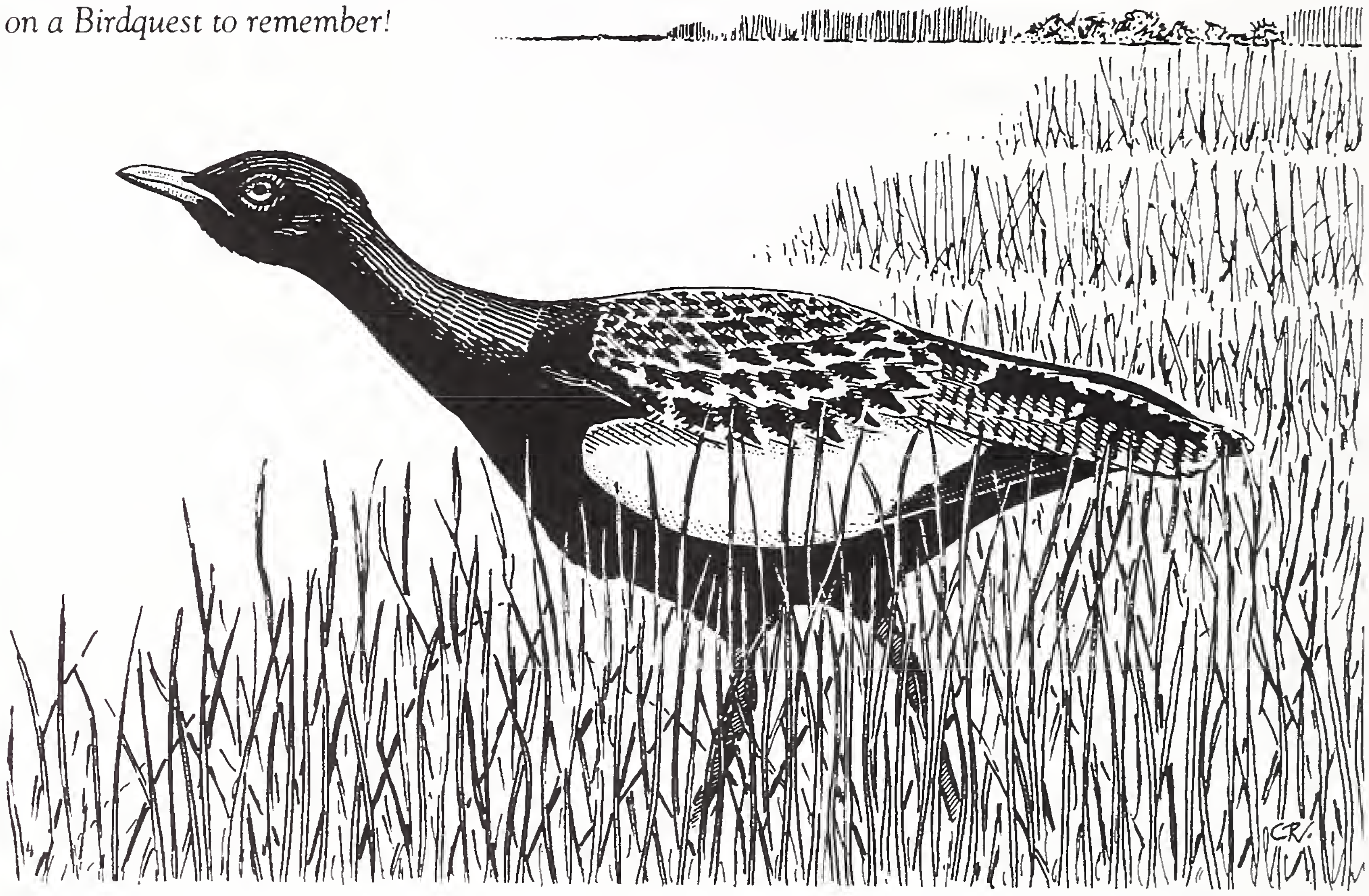

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Guidelines for contributors

Whilst the Editor is always pleased to discuss possible contributions with potential authors, and to advise on preparation, it would be helpful if the following guidelines could be adhered to:

1. **Articles** These should be written clearly, preferably typed, on one side of the page, with all lines double-spaced, leaving wide margins, and should be no longer than 2,000 words. Scientific names should appear at the first mention of each species or, if all species appear in a table, they may be given there instead. Scientific names should, where possible, follow T. Inskipp, N. Lindsey and W. Duckworth (1996) *An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Oriental Region.*

Any tables to accompany articles should be prepared on separate pieces of paper, and be thoroughly checked. Titles of tables should be self-explanatory. Diagrams should be clearly drawn, in ink, ideally 15cm wide and 11cm high. References should be cited in the order in which they appear during the paper in the same style used in this Bulletin.

It would be helpful if *two* copies of each contribution could be submitted, and also if possible the text submitted on a computer disk, ideally in Microsoft Word, in either PC or Macintosh format.

2. **From the field** These should follow the format in the current edition of the OBC Bulletin, and be sent to the Bulletin Editor, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK.

3. **News/Information** Typed or handwritten contributions should be sent to the Bulletin Editor, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK.

Although every effort is made to retain all articles in their submitted form, the Editorial Committee reserves the right to make changes that it deems necessary, and, in a minimum of cases, without prior reference to the author. It is assumed that all contributors submitting material understand and accept these conditions. All contributors, photographers and artists, in submitting material for the OBC Bulletin, also give permission for their work to be used in the OBC Internet pages.

For **Around the Orient, Recently Published, Stray Feathers** and **Free Press**, the deadline for submission of material is 15th February (May Bulletin) and 15th July (October Bulletin). The deadlines do not apply to main articles which will be published as soon as possible after acceptance by the Editorial Committee.

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